

punk planet

ISSUE #58

NOV. AND DEC. 2003

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notes from underground

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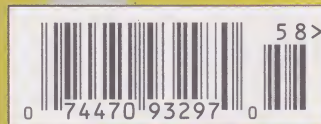
PUNK ROCK BUDDHISM

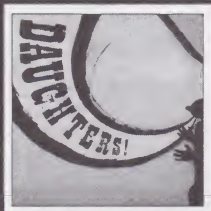


HEROIN

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**IS THE U.S. LOOKING
THE OTHER WAY?**





DAUGHTERS
canada songs CD



Daughters burst forth, middle fingers raised high, with an unreal debut full-length of ultra-brutal grind-influenced screaming chaos, with songs combining so much so quickly that it's almost dizzying, but they somehow manage to hold it all together and still take it way up a notch. This may sound like a bunch of grandiose hype, but we're dead serious... this album is absolutely crushing and could shake the foundation of heavy music as we know it.



FIND HIM AND KILL HIM
cut them to pieces CD



NorCal thrash and skatepunk with enough biting social commentary to please straight-edge kids and punks alike.



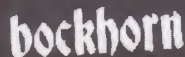
A LIFE ONCE LOST
a great artist CD



Recorded by respected engineer Eric Rachel at Trax East Studios (Dillinger Escape Plan, Every Time I Die) over a twenty day period, „A Great Artist“ is technical precision personified. An album rich with machine like rhythm, awe inspiring fret board gymnastics, and brutally demented vocal stylings.



DEAD BY JULY
before dishonor CD



Hard hitting anthemic old school punk-punchy vocals, ripping guitars and a progressive political charge.



INTEGRITY
to die for CD



INTEGRITY "To Die For" MCD/LP is a true reclamation of the throne for INTEGRITY. Produced and engineered by Ben Schigel (Ringworm, Chimaira), "To Die For" is a collection of eight blood boiling songs that serve as progression for the band all the while embracing the approach of their influential past.



UTAH!
plays well with others CD
bifocal media

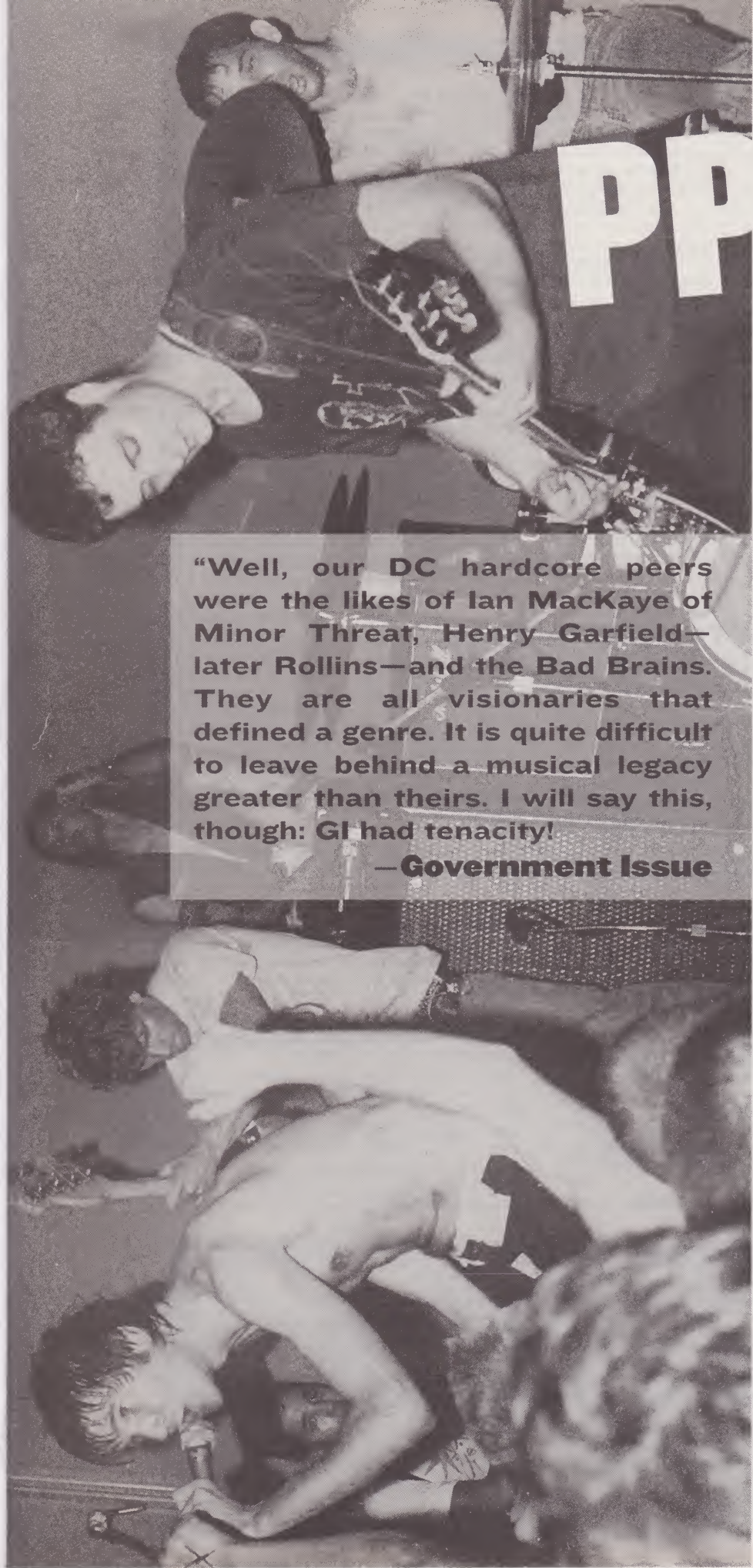
Utah!'s second full length release on Bifocal Media "Plays Well With Others" consists of carefully molded rock songs that are both lush and anthemic. Uplifting, raw vocals combined with intense guitar melodies, warm, saturated, confident cello riffs, and dense, well-layered drums, this record manages to look forward without relying on established trends. This is truly a unique album that deeply involves the listener in each song, which is a thorough, sincere expression of itself, populating a complete world of music.

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"Well, our DC hardcore peers were the likes of Ian MacKaye of Minor Threat, Henry Garfield—later Rollins—and the Bad Brains. They are all visionaries that defined a genre. It is quite difficult to leave behind a musical legacy greater than theirs. I will say this, though: GI had tenacity!

—Government Issue

58

9 Mail

15 Static

Punk rock poster artist Art Chantry gets into MOMA; Remembering Ten Grand's Matt Davis; Soup Pedaling; Fighting John Ashcroft one book at a time; Blown to Bits; Bracing for war in North Korea; Emo's new read; Get Your War On.

34 Interviews

Government Issue

TV on the Radio

Paint it Black

Angie Reed

the Jealous Sound

the Legendary Shack Shakers

64 Articles

Heroin, be the Death of Me

El Rock No Tiene La Cuplpa

How to Destroy Your Sex Drive

Buddha with a Mohawk

Bringing People's History to the Streets

A Cup of Hope: a photo essay

102 Columns

112 Fiction

117 DIY Files

Early to Bed,

Everything that Lives, Eats

Reviews

126 Music

154 Zines

162 Books

168 See Also

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the risks

intro58

Sometimes, in the process of putting out a magazine, you end up with a story feels *bigger* than the space between your front and back covers can handle. I'm not talking actual length—anyone keeping score knows that we've printed *crazy* long articles (ones that dwarf this issue's nine pager) in the past—I'm talking about the scope and impact of a story. In the case of this issue's cover, "Heroin, Be the Death of Me" (dig the Velvet Underground nod), the story feels big enough that it may just get up and walk off the page in search of larger confines. Which is precisely why it's amazing that we've even got the story.

Originally born as simply a statistic I'd read (that heroin production in Afghanistan has risen by 1,800 percent since the US-induced fall of the Taliban), in the hands of ace reporter George Sanchez (who knew we had a formally-trained investigative reporter writing record reviews?), it's grown into a beast hefty enough to take on all comers. While certainly not a "smoking gun" story that paints the White House as drug runners—let's face it, these guys are *way* too crafty for that—George's piece sure does leave some powerful folks with some serious 'splainin' to do, as it creates a frightening picture of an administration that will take a victory at any price—even at the expense of the people of Afghanistan and junkies the world over.

"Heroin, Be the Death of Me" is one of those stories that keeps me engaged in this work as *Punk Planet* quickly rounds the

bend into its 10th year. As 2003 comes to an end, it's amazing to start thinking about the distance we've come over the last decade. Not to get too nostalgic prematurely—there's still a whole 'nother issue before the official anniversary—it's been a great run. What was started as a reactionary music magazine has grown into much more, thanks mainly to the support of readers like yourself who have been willing to take the seemingly off-course turns that we've thrown at you over the years. Thanks.

As always, a couple changes to report: First off, you may have noticed some subscription envelopes falling out of your magazine. It's something we're trying out to see if making it *easier* for you to subscribe (we've even covered the postage) will actually entice you to do so. Tired of trying to track down the magazine at your local newsstand? It now couldn't be simpler to subscribe (and we'll love you if you do, as it really helps us out financially). Finally, it's with a heavy heart that I bid farewell to one of my favorite columnists in the magazine, Al Burian. Al's feeling the need to cut down on his commitments, and sadly we're getting the boot—at least temporarily. He'll be missed.

Thanks for everything, and see you in the new year.

DAN

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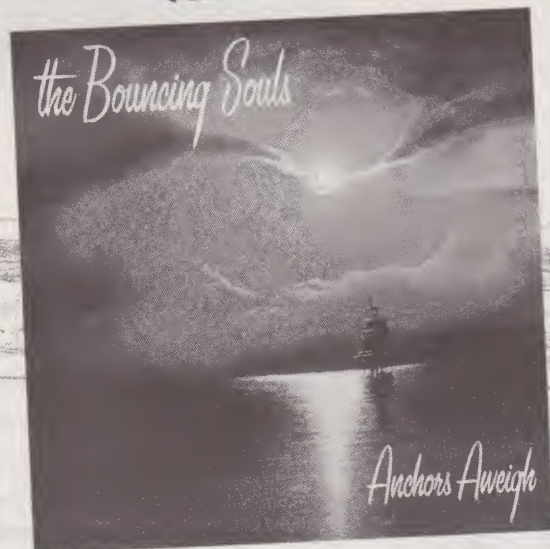
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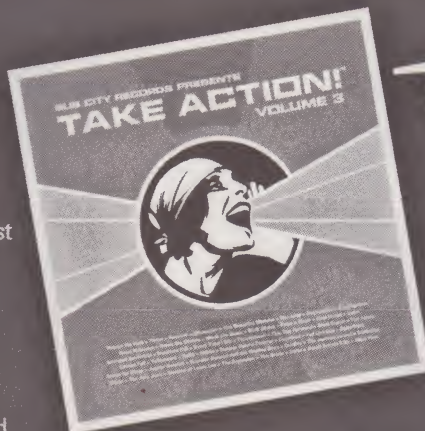
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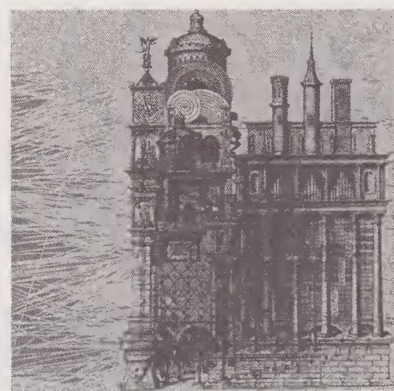
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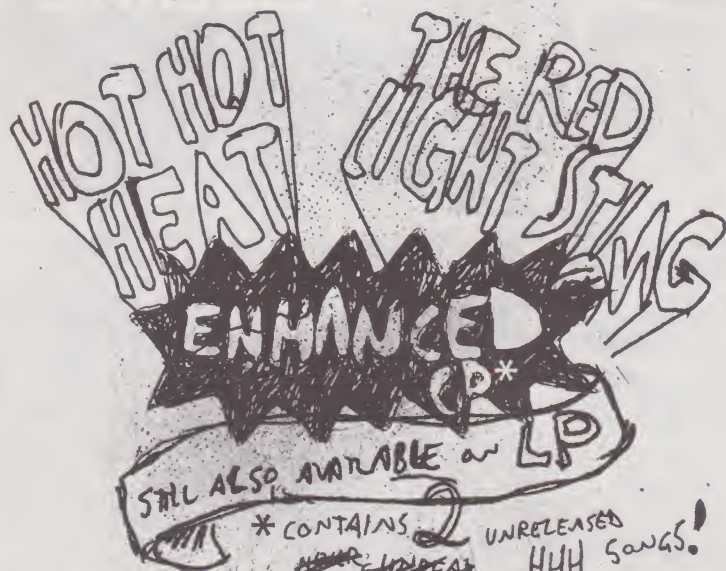
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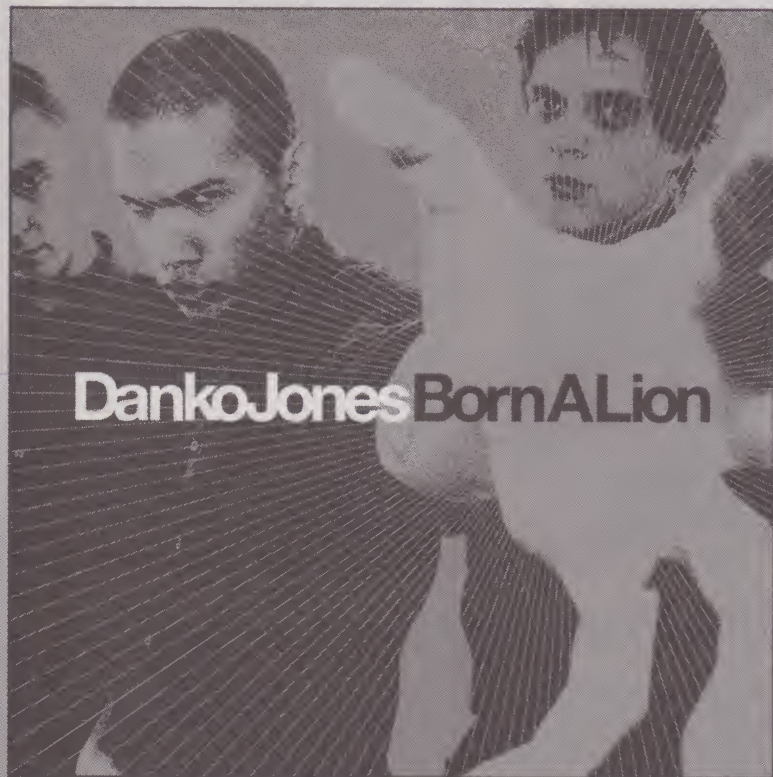
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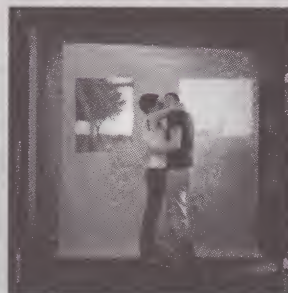
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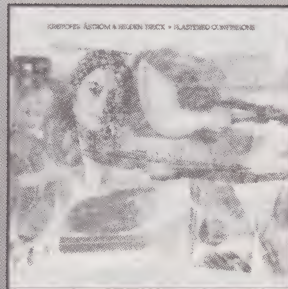
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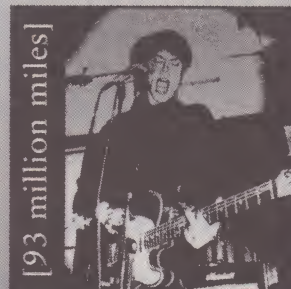
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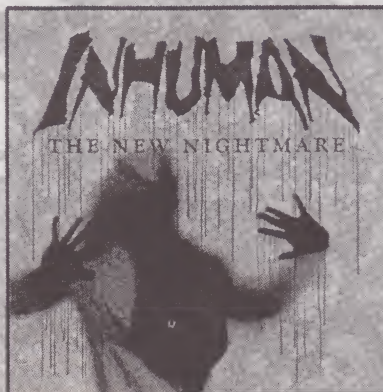
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Glad to be of Service.

► Punk Planet,

I just finished reading Jeff Guntzel's story "The Devil Inside" about his trip back to Iraq after yet another Gulf War [PP57] and I wanted to thank you for your unwavering coverage of what's happened in Iraq since the first Gulf War.

I remember when I first picked up *Punk Planet* #30, which featured a cover story on the sanctions in Iraq. I couldn't believe that a music magazine would do something like that. Anyway, I've since learned that *Punk Planet* is more than just a music magazine and I've appreciated all the risks you've been willing to take over the years.

Thanks,

Anne Stevenson

Book 'em

► Punk Planet Book Review people—

I recently saw an issue of *Punk Planet* that disproved a theory I had about your book reviews section. I've sent three books for review over the past three years (all of which were self-published and dealing with punk culture themes), and none of them were reviewed. I came to understand that the book review section is for non-fiction with a political/apolitical focus. Which I think is a great thing. Then I saw a very recent issue that had a review of a Nick Hornby novel [ed note: it was actually an independently-released non-fiction book of his music essays, but the point still holds] that really surprised me. Since I have advertised quite a bit over the past few years, I'm well aware of your policy of keeping it independent without soliciting to mainstream artists. Nick Hornby, with all due respect to his work, is the literary equivalent of Avril Lavigne. What sur-

prised me is that books like *Coloring Outside the Lines* and *Salad Days* are by writers who epitomize DIY. Please be fair—keep it underground. If you want to review fiction, there's some good stuff out there being done by independent underground publishers.

Sincerely,

Daniel Smith

Ray-sing Hell.

► My dearest Punk Planet -

As an American, living in Bristol for five years, getting ahold of *Punk Planet* once in a while is always a breath of fresh air. This last issue [PP57], however, included an article that was truly close to my heart.

When it comes to real life heroes, for me they don't get much bigger than Amy Ray and Winona LaDuke. I have been an avid Indigo Girls fan since I was prepubescent, but a few years ago their work with indigenous and environmental rights groups (especially LaDuke's Honor The Earth and Indigenous Women's Network, where I actually pilgrimaged a few years ago) sparked an interest in me that I couldn't ignore.

After messing around for a year or so, uncertain of what to do with my life, I ended up starting the right conversations with the right people and am now a PhD student in Historical Studies at Bristol University. With no academic history in the subject but a motivating passion and a precious anger, I am working under the title "The History of Native American Grassroots Anti-Nuclear Activism and Its Relationship to US Nuclear Policy." I never saw myself as the type of person who would say "This is where I want my life to go" (let alone to somewhere as seemingly banal as policy study), but thanks to the tireless work of Amy and

Winona and countless other grassroots activists, I have found a pursuit that teaches me, frustrates me, and kicks my ass towards activism every day.

In 1997, Amy Ray wrote a song called "Shed Your Skin" about her Indian activism taking her away from a relationship. In *Curve* magazine (Jan. 1998) she said, "I found it important to say, 'Look, what I've been involved with has given me some freedom in my heart and soul that I've never experienced. You should find the same thing.'"

When I was 18, I got a tattoo of the words "SHED YOUR SKIN" and three years later I realized why: I wanted that freedom too. Amy Ray changed my life. There are no other words.

Thank you for the interview . . . it reminded me of the importance of the work that they do and inspires me to keep going. Hopefully it might have spread the word and inspired some other folks too.

All the best,

Melissa Warner

Our Bad: Corrections

In PP57, all hell broke loose spelling-wise (and on our front cover of all places). Winona LaDuke, we know how to spell your first name and will never confuse the spelling with a Judd again. And the Dismemberment Plan, your name is very long, but has one less E than we gave it. We have brought on a second copyeditor to help with these problems in the future.

In PP56, we inadvertently didn't credit the woman who transcribed the Jello Biafra/Greg Palast interview: Stephanie Booher, we thank you and apologize.

We want your letters! Send 'em along to: Punk Planet
4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613 or e-mail to
punkplanet@punkplanet.com

Salad Days



Charles Romalotti

Salad Days keeps your heart pumping high-octane gasoline and your emotions running high. I came away with a refreshed optimism. Romalotti's debut novel is quite an accomplishment...a great book. - *Maximum RockNRoll*

Kick-ass novel about discovering punk rock during the Reagan years in Nowheresville, USA. This well-written book is instantly recognizable to any punker. - *Alternative Tentacles*

Salad Days is, in a word, amazing. Nothing else I've ever read has so clearly interpreted the life of a punk, and told it so entertainingly. It's written in a way that makes you dread the thought of putting it down. I can't say enough good things, read this book.

- *Twenty Inches eZine*

Impressive and needed, Salad Days is an anthem of growing up punk. Reminded me of every perfect and worst moment in my life. I loved it.

- *Neil Edgar, Wiener Society fanzine*

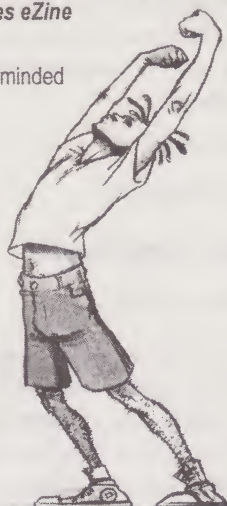
Salad Days is a book I now consider one of the finest I've ever read.

- *punkrockreviews.com*

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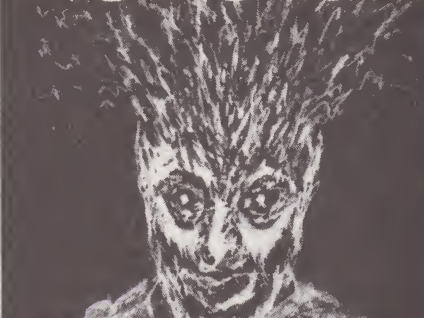
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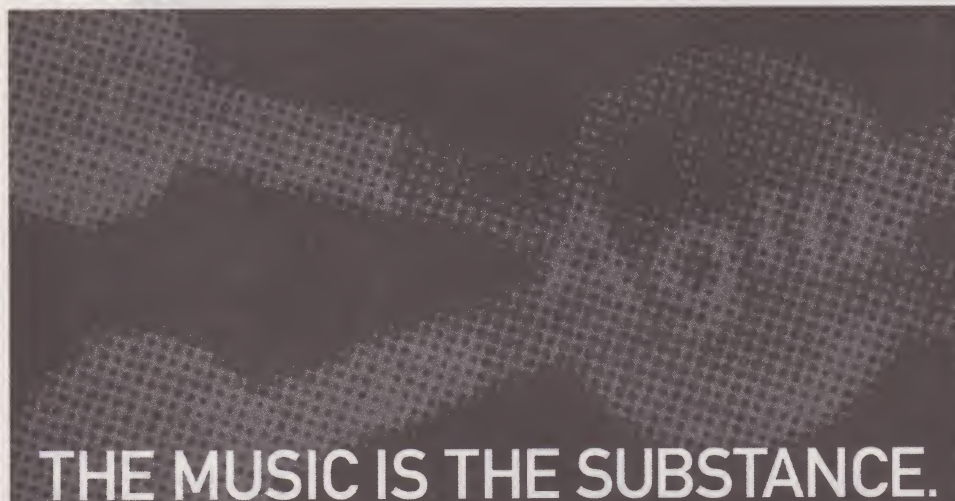
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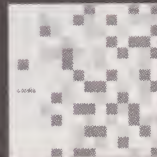
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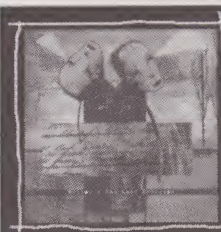


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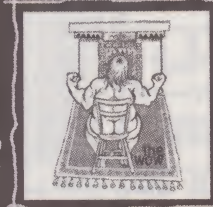
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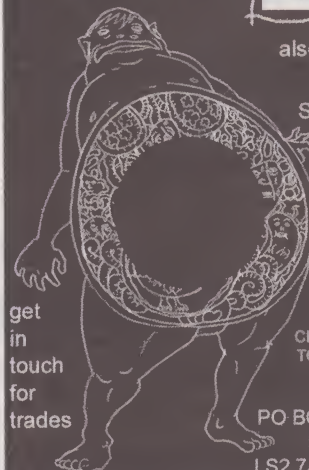
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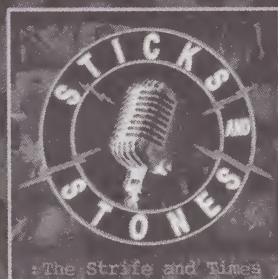


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SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

"The design world ignores this stuff completely."

WHO LET MAVERICK GRAPHIC DESIGNER ART CHANTRY INTO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART?

New York's Museum of Modern Art's PSI exhibit of Art Chantry's posters and record covers, *Art Chantry: Greatest Hits. Vol. 1* is proof that the art world is ready to get up off its ass and open a window. The fresh air blowing through the halls of MOMA's Brooklyn outpost along with exhibits like Peter Saville's Factory Records designs currently showing at the Design Museum in London and "The LP Show" at New York gallery Exit Art, confirm that high art is beginning to embrace the underground. *Greatest Hits* has evoked widespread critical acclaim for a genre that has traditionally been stashed on the fringe: punk rock design. MOMA's recognition of Chantry's street-smart talents makes headway in the struggle to

debunk the groundless myth that punk is synonymous with stupidity.

While Chantry admits that the PSI show is flattering, he attributes at least part of the attention to the creative vacuum fine art and graphic design are currently stuck in.

"The 'art' culture is changing," Chantry explains. "Since the death of the modernist dialog in fine art, it's been struggling for definition. [And] with the practice of design being thrown back into the hands of the amateur through the innovation of the computer, design has found the same problem."

For MOMA curator Bob Nickas, there was no problem in choosing Chantry for the world-renowned museum's PSI space. "I am a big fan of his work, and for years felt that he deserved a compre-

hensive exhibition in a serious venue," he says.

While now an influential curator in the high art world, Nickas points to the punk scene of the late '70s and early '80s as a big influence "not only aesthetically, but on my values and priorities. Were it not for this background," he adds, "I might never have gotten into the work of Art Chantry," he says.

Chantry's own background with the Pacific Northwest punk rock scene came from friends, his design work for *The Rocket* magazine, and his interest in dada and surrealist art, which echoed both the detachment and unruliness of punk. But while his work became synonymous with the scene, he never quite felt part of the punk rock gang.

"To be honest, I was always considered an outsider," he says. "Now, in retrospect, I'm considered a major player because my work was so powerful to what [the scene was] saying that it was adopted by

the whole attitude of the Seattle bohemian scene. It's the way design works, when it's working well."

For Chantry, working well means working fast. An unbelievably prolific designer, the PSI exhibit displays nearly 300 pieces from Chantry's stock of thousands. Throughout his nearly 30-year career, Chantry has been experimenting with combinations of text and image. His style tends to integrate the two by using text to deface or obscure the image. A mouth made of typewriter keys, a TV set for a head, or censor strips over various body parts, all convey the desired message.

For Chantry, the body is truly a battleground, which he alternately exposes—lots of boobs in this show, kiddies—censors, tempts with drugs, and protects by advocating condom use. (In a particularly hilarious poster called "Penis Cup," Chantry includes a graph below a stern condom-holding man, showing the relative pleasure of sex



"You either loved him or you didn't know him."

REMEMBERING TEN GRAND'S MATT DAVIS WITH HIS OWN WORDS.

For those who knew Matt Davis, the news of his premature death at 26 from a seizure on August 10th, 2003 was a sucker punch.

In the music world, Matt was probably most well known for his work with Ten Grand (formerly called Vida Blue). Ten Grand earned a reputation as one of the hardest working groups in the underground. Over the past several years, the band toured the US several times over and played an estimated 400 shows. There seemingly wasn't a state, town or basement that had not been visited; not an ounce of highway unexplored. This year the band not only released their most fine-tuned album, *This is the Way to Rule*, but they also had the opportunity to hit Europe and bring their sound to another part of the world this past summer.

But Ten Grand was merely one aspect of Matt's musical universe. Matt explored so many different sonic avenues over the years that it was often hard to keep track of which one he was currently touring with. But each project provided a different manner of release, and his songs were carved from a rainbow of emotions—sorrow, anger, happiness, grief, desperation, and every other sense he dared to explore.

without a condom (highest, obviously), sex without a condom (a little lower), and genital wart removal (close to nonexistent)) Censor strips and large type frequently cover important body parts like eyes, mouths, crotches and nipples—not because Chantry's a prude, he just knows where you're looking.

"Nirvana #1" and "Nirvana #2" a pair of posters from 1997 feel like the most quintessentially Chantry pieces on display in *Greatest Hits, Vol. 1*. The two small silkscreens are hung side-by-side, and are identical, except that "Nirvana #2" has been vacuum-formed around the telltale shape of Mickey Mouse's head so that its shabby wrinkles jut out into the third dimension. The

posters, originally for an art show called "Nirvana: Capitalism and the Consumed Image", are full of situationist slogans and agit-prop juxtaposed against feel-good '50s-style ad graphics. The ghosts of the appropriation aesthetic of Andy Warhol or Jeff Koons loom large, but it's the content of the text that really makes these works jump to life.

"Wherever there is abundant consumption," one section of the "Nirvana" poster reads, "a major spectacular opposition between youth and adults comes to the fore among the false roles." There's a lot of truth to that sentence, especially as it applies to Chantry's old stomping ground of the pre-"Teen Spirit" Seattle of the late '80s and early '90s.

While it's since been spoiled and defiled by overexposure and inevitable dilution (Chantry himself high tailed it out of there a few years ago), Pacific Northwest punk at that time was the most important thing to happen to American music since the birth of hip-hop in the Bronx and the biggest thing in guitar music since NYC punk hit CBGBs before that.

The Pacific Northwest represented a true socio-economic alternative then: DIY was the way to go—"abundant consumption" was not an option.

Greatest Hits vol. 1 is a fitting reminder, especially now. With most New York galleries either closed or exhibiting dull group shows and the Brooklyn music scene caught

up in hedonistic replays of the "me generation" '80s, Chantry's work is like a brightly colored middle finger pointed straight at the tastemakers of New York City.

"Many of the artists who saw Art's work at PSI told me that it was one of the best shows they had seen lately," Nickas says. I thought the show would kick things up, and judging by the response, it has."

What Chantry's work shows—and what is often glossed over in retrospective evaluations of "alternative" scenes like this one—is that to subscribe to an alternative culture is an inevitably political act, a rejection of forced normalcy. This bold show by PSI and Nickas is evidence that that Chantry's work since

Fighting back tears, I sat in the audience at his memorial in Iowa City on August 13th. The service was packed as hundreds of people made the long trek to pay their respects to a devoted friend, passionate artist and inspiring musician. At one point, one of Matt's friends stood up to the podium and uttered a statement that summed the experience of making an acquaintance with Matt up in a nutshell: "You either loved him or you didn't know him."

One way to know him, was to talk with him and revel in his subtle humor and the optimism with which he approached his projects. The following few words—too few, I know—are from the last conversation I ever had with Matt (originally part of a longer interview I had submitted to this magazine). He was in a really good mood that day, so ripe with youth and happiness. That's how I'll remember him.

One of the things Ten Grand has been known for is its sense of humor...

A problem with a lot of hardcore bands is that they take themselves so seriously. To me, it's nice to be at a show where you can play in front of 15 people that could give a shit and you *don't* feel like you've failed in your "mission." The thing I remember most about shows when I was growing up was that everybody was completely different, but we all enjoyed the crap out of it. The basement shows in Iowa City had a bunch of kids—several of them with Motley Crüe shirts and others with mohawks. It was exciting and fun to be there. I think we try to bring that element out when we play now.

the late 1970s is the closest you'll find to a manifesto for a scene that once really *was* an alternative.

But if you're thinking a major museum show will have Chantry—who makes most of his work for unknown bands at bargain-basement prices—cashing in on design commissions, think again. "I've had many museum and gallery shows," he says with his trademark self-deprecating wit, "the design world ignores this stuff completely. The popular culture—if they encounter it—copies it and otherwise assumes I'm unapproachable. For instance, after I had an article about me published in *Communication Arts* magazine, I didn't have any work at all for nearly a year." —Nick Stillman

Something feels good: emo's new read.

"I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO KNEW I WAS WRITING THIS BOOK WONDERED IF I WAS GOING TO FILL IT WITH A BUNCH OF STORIES OF 15 YEAR-OLDS WHO HAD THEIR HEARTS BROKEN."

Andy Greenwald is 26, which makes him about a tenth of a century too old to post a live journal or to cry at a Dashboard Confessional show. Which should mean that he's also too old to get lost in the romance of another emo band's love song, but as the sight-seeing, travelogue-penned author of *Nothing Feels Good: Punk Rock, Teenagers and Emo*, Greenwald found a place among such songs. In the book, Greenwald looks at this much-maligned movement from enough angles that even the most jaded

What's it like being a fairly well-known independent rock outfit from Iowa?

[laughs] It's pretty sweet because the only people who pay attention to you in Iowa if you are into punk or hardcore are the dudes who are tossing beer cans at you and calling you "fag" while they drive down the road. We go places and we're just *ourselves*. Iowa is a very unpretentious state—there is no reason for us to dress up or anything like that. We are what we are, and if you don't like us then you're not the first, and you're probably not the last. It's awesome to have pride in where you're from. It might be totally cheesy, but I have a frickin' area code tattoo. [laughs] I'm glad I had the friends that I do; I'm glad that I grew up around the people I did; I'm glad I have the work ethic and lack of need to pretend. I think that's been determined in large part by being from this musical community. I'm glad I'm from here.

What was it like being on tour for eight months?

I can't remember a day when I didn't spend at least 12 of 13 waking hours laughing and having the time of my life. It's sweet to wake up every day and say, "Well, I guess I'll go play music with my friends and eat a bunch of crap on the way there." [laughs] It was hard not being able to write or have our own rooms and our own space, but I never wished I wasn't doing it. —Brian Peterson

A remembrance of Matt Davis is online at www.ten-grand.com

sent, I'm sure I talked to at least 100 people. There were definitely times where I felt like I was drowning in it. I actually used to think that Ashcroft had a file on me because my professional job was to instant message sad 14-year-old girls in Utah. [laughs] I really thought that was going to get me in trouble.

When did you know that this book was going to be about those kids?

That *was* the book to me. The kids were the heart of it. They were the lifeblood all along. Bands come and go, but the relationships and the passions of these kids is what defines emo to me. I think I first had a sense of that late last summer after having the IM conversa-

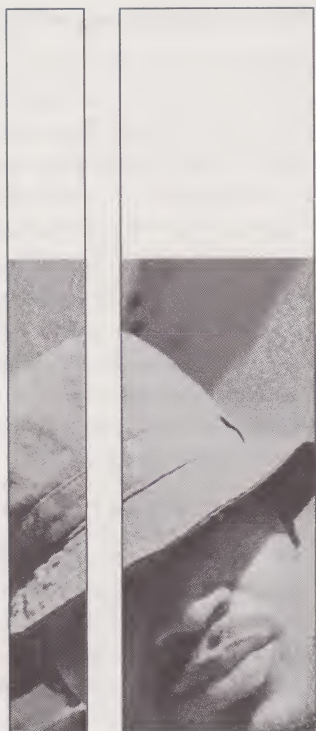
reader can take something away from it—even if you have been a bit disappointed with what's been passed off as emo lately.

How many people would you say you talked to for this book?

Oh god, too many. [laughs]

Would you say hundreds?

Yeah, that's probably a safe, conservative number. When you get right down to it and you count all the instant message windows or e-mails I



“To me, it’s about being part of the community *right now.*”

HIP-HOP YOUTH ACTIVIST MICHAEL CRENSHAW BRINGS HIS STREET-SMART TEACHINGS TO HOMELESS YOUTH.

For the past 10 years, Michael Crenshaw has been MCing in Hungry Mob, a Portland, Oregon-based hip-hop group. In the daytime, he applies his knowledge of hip-hop culture to altruistic purposes, teaching a class on hip-hop’s history, social impact, and applications at New Avenues for Youth, an advocacy clinic for homeless and at-risk youth, and the Youth Opportunity Center (YO!), a job training center for low-income and otherwise disadvantaged youth.

Portland is a small city—only about 1.7 million people live in the entire metropolitan area—but at any given time, it’s estimated that over 400 young people are homeless. With budgets tightening for all social programs and devastating cuts for the Oregon school system, people like Crenshaw are that much more essential to ensuring the safety and education of area youth.

tion that ends the book—which went from outrageous to tragic to outrageously tragic in mere minutes. I think a lot of people who knew I was writing this book wondered if I was going to fill it with a bunch of stories of 15 year-olds who had their hearts broken. A hallmark of this generation is that they have no problems venting or sharing things with total strangers. Some of the specifics are juvenile, but the real issues behind them can cut much deeper. I remember what it was like being a teenager, when you’re at the point where it’s hard to realize anything outside of your own head. The little things really do mean a lot.

There’s a chapter in the book where you spend an evening with some kids from Long Island on their way to a Dashboard Confessional show. When I read

that, I just thought of how mind-blowing it must have been. There you were with these kids who were coming to represent this music. But I think for a person like you or me, our typical response would have been that they didn’t “get it.”

Well, some of these kids are *not* music kids. They probably won’t be buying records when they’re 24. They may very well end up as accountants. Time moves so differently when you’re that age. Some of the kids that I was tracking online are totally different now—they changed *so much* in just nine months. I still get instant messages from the kids who were in the book and I love that. It makes me feel so much better to spend my time with people who really love music. And they do.

Reading the book, I came to

realize that, despite my own petty biases, those kids *get it*. They understand emo—perhaps even more than I ever will.

The way these kids approach communication and music online is very different. At times, that made me feel old, but once I had that hook, I realized the way people were talking about music was the same way I was. I would talk to these kids that looked like jocks but they were writing in their journals. That made me feel kind of good.

Do you think that when it comes to emo that sort of connection you’re getting at here has to be momentary?

I think so. One of the defining things about being that age is that every moment feels like a lifetime. I think that the Internet mimics that: it makes

every second of your life a motion picture. ¶ What it is, also, is that people love to have music that is theirs—particularly in punk and *doubly* so in emo. The song that got you through a break up, it’s *yours* and it’s the best and it means something. So to be told that someone else has done something like that for someone else? That’s just insulting.

In the past couple of years I’ve spent a lot of time saying that this music no longer represents me. I’ve sort of hid in my room or at bars or behind Brian Eno records as a way to make sure that the way this music is *currently* being done is no longer associated with me. But when I say that, I’m just being selfish—and, ultimately, the understanding I’ve come to is that this music is *about* being selfish.

How do you teach your class?

One of the things I like about working with the homeless population is that in the class I'm dealing with social awareness through hip-hop culture and that culture was created by disenfranchised people, by people of color, by poor people—it's a street culture—so they can relate to it. We usually start off looking at historical and cultural stuff in regards to hip-hop, like where it came from, the roots of it, who's contributed to it, and what it's evolved into. ¶ I really try to get the kids to look at how companies are using hip-hop music to market certain ideas and imagery towards youth, specifically. Then I try to have them put that up against the issues that *really* affect them and to look at how we can use hip-hop, art, and creativity as a forum to express those issues. I wanna open the doors to encourage kids to creatively express what's really going on with them, as opposed to letting it be defined *for* them by the industry and the media. After that, we get into writing, recording; sometimes we'll have freestyle ciphers and battles.

What do you encourage them to write about?

One of the biggest issues to me with young people in hip-hop is how mainstream artists remain in this box that's safe for them—like the subject matter we're bombarded with over and over again,

having to do with drugs and sex and violence and materialism. Drugs, sex, and violence are the number one destructive forces in the lives of young people: HIV, gangs, addiction, as well as people trying to chase material dreams, and all that feeding into the industrial prison complex. So why is that message mainstream? Why is *that* pushed and marketed? ¶ What does it mean for young people if I can turn on 95.5 [a local mainstream hip-hop radio station] and have people telling me about sellin' crack all day long to the point where I get used to it and I think it's an *acceptable* avenue, but at the same time, there's Measure II in my community? [Measure II is mandatory minimum-sentencing bill in Oregon which has more than doubled the amount of juveniles in prison since its passage in 1995.] To me, there are a lot of contradictions in our society, and hip-hop is really a microcosm of all the issues that affect young people.

Do you get personal satisfaction from doing this?

It's funny, because I've been a struggling underground artist for a little over a decade, and I still haven't made it to where I can survive solely off my art, which is my goal. I have this awareness about what I do: it's not about "Once I make it, I will give back to the community." To me, it's about being part of the community *right now*. —Julianne Shepherd

It really is. That's tough to think about. Especially when you're a music lover. I mean, to think that you may never love music as much as you loved music four or five years ago is hard. I still love things all the time, but there is a certain personal connection that I may never be able to recreate. ¶ I can admit this now: when I sat there with the book contract thinking about what the hell I was doing, or when people would ask me why I was writing about these bands that I don't even listen to . . . honestly, I *didn't* know why. It took a friend pointing out a few things to me in terms of constant interests or connections to things in the past and why they're stronger at certain times and not in others. That was my own emo. All of a sudden, I saw it and I realized I couldn't judge it. —Trevor Kelley

"The faster you go deaf, the more time you have to read."

THE UNDERGROUND TAKES LOW LITERACY RATES AND ANTI-EDUCATION APATHY INTO ITS OWN HANDS.

Here's something some folks wouldn't expect punk rockers to care about: A staggering number of libraries throughout the US are closing due to a lack of interest while anemic national literacy campaigns fail to "make reading fun." Yet a small, but committed, group of punks are looking to lend a hand in reversing these two trends.

"A little while ago, reading kept coming up in casual conversation, and I realized that people are *not* reading," says author Brian Gage. "They could name a slew of different bands—and each member of the band—but couldn't

remember the last book they read, or the name of an author they liked."

Frustrated by this disinterest in literature, Gage turned his book-signing for his new book *The Amazing Snox Box* into the 10-city Books and Bands Tour. Gage and the Soft Skull Press bookmobile trekked from coast to coast, teaming up for shows with local bands to draw in people that otherwise might not come.

"I know there are literacy efforts all over the place to get people interested in reading more books," explained Gage. "However, in many ways liter-

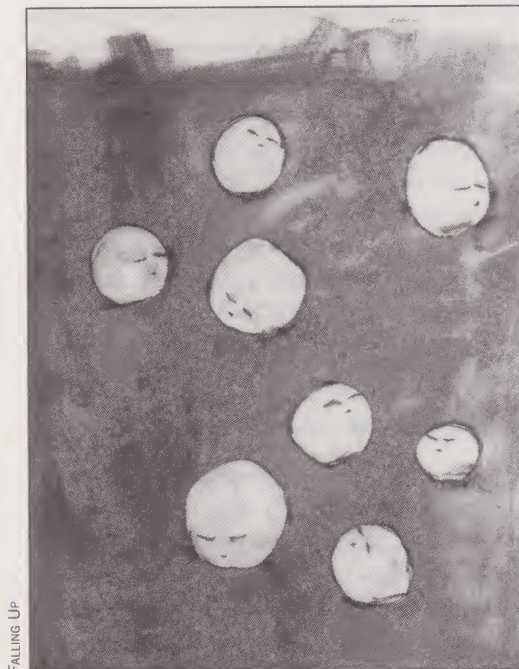
ature is becoming antiquated with the rise of corporate pop culture, television, and advertising. I think Books and Bands can help fight that by teaming up with the counter-culture cool of rock and hip-hop musicians."

While organizing the tour, Gage realized that despite the fact that certain writers drew the same audiences as certain musicians, their careers rarely crossed paths on stage. He decided that joining forces seemed an obvious untapped resource.

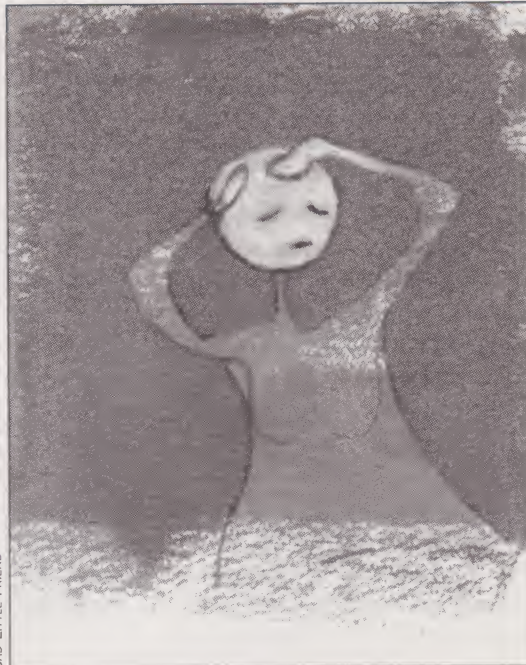
"I remember back in the '90s, a CD came out with Kurt Cobain singing and playing music behind William S Burroughs reading poetry, and several people I know thought it was the greatest thing ever created," Gage says. "But had it just been

GALLERY: Falling Up

PAINTINGS BY TARA JANE O'NEIL



FALLING UP



SAD LITTLE FRIEND



WALKING DEAD

Tara Jane O'Neil's artwork is both playful and creepy—and often walks a fine line between the two. Her art “on paper, canvas, wood, or whatever else she finds lying around” has been compiled in the book *Who Takes a Feather* (Map—www.mapup.net). Her art is for sale at www.tarajaneoneil.com.

Burroughs reading his poetry, it would have most likely slipped beneath the 'cool' radar. So I suppose musicians can really do a lot more for authors than we can for them in the sense of creating icon and dictating what is hip.”

While Gage is an author who's using musicians to push indie lit. into the limelight; BlöodHag is an edu-core band from Seattle that formed to speak out against the trend of apathy towards education. Their motto is “the faster you go deaf, the more time you have to read,” and they thrash out odes to Kurt Vonnegut and Jules Verne. They play in libraries to crowds of punks and teachers. At the climax of

their shows, they pelt audience members with books.

BlöodHag singer Jake Stratton's parents are both library directors, and as a kid he was baffled some people didn't know how to read. Now, he's baffled that metal-heads don't know who HP Lovecraft is, or that Zeppelin fanatics don't understand “Misty Mountain Hop.”

“But really,” Stratton said, “I don't care what they read. I just want them to read.”

After an article about BlöodHag ran in the American Library Association's trade publication, the band received over 300 requests to play shows from libraries all over the

country. They quickly learned that libraries are unlike any other venue, pulling in children, teachers, writers, and punks alike. At one show, an entire eighth grade class showed up because their teacher promised them extra credit to attend.

This response has come as a relief to Stratton, who has little faith in mainstream attempts to get kids to read. “I can see how Barbara Bush's heart was in the right place, but people don't hook into that,” he says. “You've got to find ways to make kids want to come, and you've got to find music that teachers can respect. When we play, the combination of rebellious

kids and authority figures makes everyone stand-offish at first. But by the time the band starts chucking books at people's heads, all façades and inhibitions are dropped.”

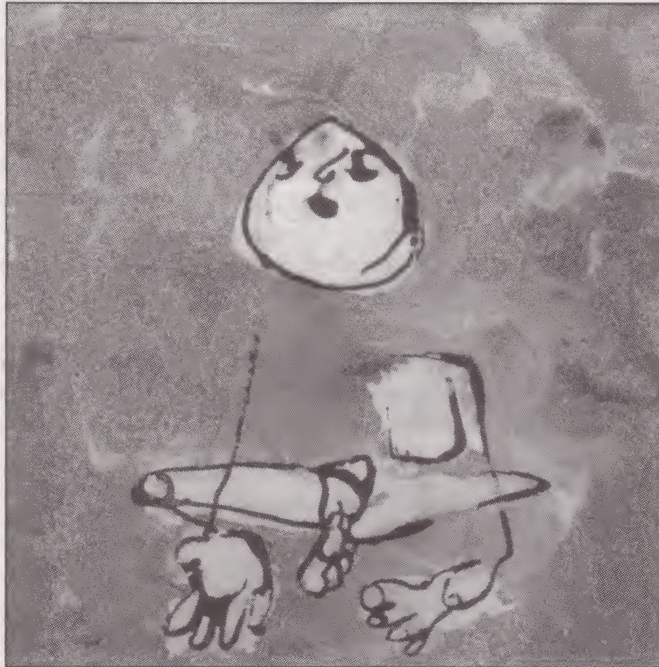
Neither Gage nor BlöodHag aspire to cure the illiteracy epidemic and battle the library budget crisis overnight. They just want to do their part, by getting people interested in reading by mixing books with the undeniable appeal of rock.

“Dogs need their vitamins wrapped up in cheese for them to swallow it,” says Gage, “so maybe humans need their mental vitamins wrapped up in an indie-rock fest.”

—Abbie Jarman



AT HOME



WHAT WE MADE



Writer's Block.

WHEN ACTIVIST/AUTHOR DANIEL BURTON-ROSE FELT A PAIN IN HIS ARM, HE THOUGHT IT WAS NOTHING. THEN HIS WHOLE BODY SHUT DOWN.

Daniel Burton-Rose is an author who can't write. Literally. With his first book, *The Celling of America*, at the age of 19, Burton-Rose developed symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome, the debilitating forearm cramping that comes from repetitive stress injuries. Young and looking at a whirlwind career, he tried to ignore it until his body finally crapped out, and now has to avoid the physical act of writing whenever possible, while continuing to publish with the assistance of

friends who receive tapes and transcribe them.

The way Burton-Rose tells it, his projects—such as his long-awaited history of '70s revolutionaries the George Jackson Brigade, and an expanded revision of *Battle of Seattle*, tentatively titled *Confronting Capitalism*—were always supposed to be quick books, and are now taking years to come to fruition. Now that the quick hits of youth have become long marches, Daniel's story is about turning his identity as a writer

into his own personal prison—and learning how to break out.

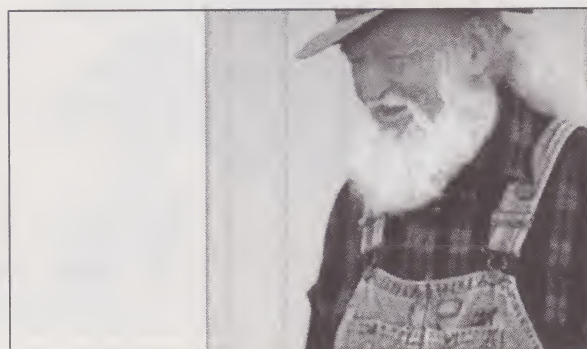
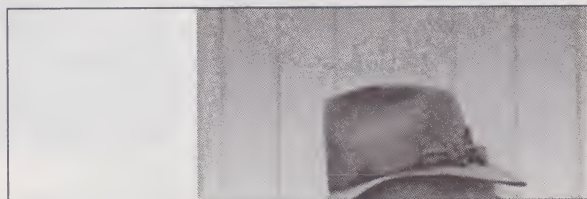
I want to plot your injury against your development as an author and journalist. When did it first begin?

It started out when I was 19, when I was putting together the first book, *The Celling of America*. I worked on that book a lot and I started getting this pain in my wrist, which I knew was bad. The injury kept crawling up my body: forearm, shoulder, and radiating throughout my back. But I was at an exciting time when my first book came out. I was writing for publications I really liked and was impressed by, so I just pushed the injury until I collapsed. ¶ I spent a

year researching Ken Silverstein's *Private Warriors* in DC. That project, as with my prison stuff, was in an extremely alienating environment. I was in the administrative center of the empire, tracking down nuclear intellectuals, the people who wrote articles advocating a first-strike policy in the '80s and '90s, the people who are being drawn on again with the new Bush administration. My days included going to the suburbs of Arlington, Virginia, or the Institute for Land Warfare breakfasts in hotel conference rooms, sitting with representatives from Lockheed-Martin and the US Army. That was the emotional environment of the place. ¶ I

"Ram it down the boss's throat!"

AT 68, ANARCHIST FOLKSINGER AND HOBO PHILOSOPHER UTAH PHILLIPS IS STILL RAISING HELL.



Anarchist-activist and acclaimed folksinger Utah Phillips turned 68 years old this year. Throughout his life he's traveled a fascinating and rambling road that has lead him through the touring circuit, making records, and hosting "Loafer's Glory," his own community radio show. Calling to wish him a Happy Birthday, I had the opportunity to ask about fame, folk music, education, and his hopes for the next generation of fellow workers.

You've been out on the circuit and making music for a long time. You're as respected by your peers as one of the most famous folk singers in the country, but you don't seem to be famous outside the folk scene, why is that?

I think that fame corrupts the house of the soul. Sometime in your life, you've got to decide to stop trying to *be* somebody, and *do* something instead. Besides which, I think there are famous people that you hear about, but can you say you know them? You can't. So you have a choice: You can be well-known, or famous. Any schmuck who knows the tricks can be famous. But getting well-known means you always show up and do the work, year after year after year. It's better.

also had a hard time connecting with political peers in DC, because they were either white kids in internships, or nonviolent punks. I was living in Columbia Heights, a primarily black neighborhood next to Howard University. I didn't get out enough to make more than a few friends there. If I was there now again, I'd interact with people differently, but I was in a very polarized frame of mind then. ¶ From there I moved to Seattle to research a book on the George Jackson Brigade, an anarcho-communist guerrilla group that did a number of bombings and bank robberies in the Pacific Northwest in the '70s. Seattle was the first place where I felt at home with the community, where I could bridge between

the political kids and the people I had fun with, which had been a split since college. So that was best of times and worst of times, because I was totally losing my life, but I also was grounding out in a community in some very satisfying ways.

So when did your body finally shut down?

When I went to Seattle to do interviews for the George Jackson Brigade book. I was able to collect all this information, but I wasn't able to process it. It was tremendously frustrating, 'cause this was supposed to be a fast book. ¶ I consider my injury a result of isolation, because isolation is a constriction from the world around you, which will replenish you when you're connected

to it. So I've been learning how to be more open, and to draw in more sustaining energy from what's around me, from people, communities, and the outside world. I'm taking pleasure in building a base, and whenever it becomes apparent that I don't have a base, going back to construct it—continually going back to the foundation until it's solid. I was all into militant direct action stuff, or at least advocating it, but it's painful to brush my teeth! What's wrong with that? [laughs] So I'm working on recreating my life—continually building power—in a way that we can use in our communities of resistance as well. It's better than my body deteriorating in my late teenage years! [laughs]

Novelist William Vollmann devel-

oped carpal tunnel by writing 18 hours a day, just sitting in one place and eating candy bars.

It's pathetic. Go outside.

Was that the kind of shit you were doing?

I had a life and there *were* people I enjoyed. I lived in collective housing, but I often kept myself somewhat isolated. I had a destructive dynamic where there were people that I deemed interesting and valuable who lived in other cities, and then there were a lot of other local people I dismissed without getting to know them. And yeah, all the politicians were vegans, so I had a tofu and pasta vegan diet, which didn't help. [laughs]

—Aaron Shuman

What would you say is the greatest thing you've discovered over your years of traveling and performing?

I've found this enormous folk music family. I've found people all over the country committed to having folk music—*people's* music—in their town. If I was invited to come and do a concert or a little show, I became a partner in that effort—no boss. Anybody comes on like a boss, I take a hike.

How did you come to all these conclusions about your life and your politics? Were you a big reader when you were younger, or did you discover them from other people who were in the labor movement?

I learned early to seek out elders and ask questions. I've found I can learn more from the substance of people's lives than I could from books. I'm not going to ask people what they feel about Iraq or homelessness. People know their tools when they know their relationships and when they know their workmates. I ask about those and they always guide me to the real truth. ¶ We've got to get together and make this the plan for the future. Most of you are going to join the working class after you've sharpened your skills. You're going to go into the marketplace and sell your labor. All you're going to be selling is your labor. You won't own the tools and you won't own the marketplace—this *defines* the working class. The boss wants every worker to be an independent contractor, no union, no bargaining. He'll get you as an individual at the lowest possible wage.

And because you're an independent contractor, you'll be responsible for your own health care; you'll be responsible for your retirement, but you're being abandoned to Wall Street; You'll be responsible for workman's comp, which will probably cease to exist; and you'll be in direct competition with every other wage worker in the world. The only way to resist that is to *organize*. ¶ I mean good hell—the Labor Movement gave us the weekend! It gave us mine safety laws, eight-hour days, and child labor laws! These were *not* benevolent gifts from an enlightened management. They were fought for and bled for and *died* for by workers. *That's* why we need this history. You've got to understand it. Most of all seek out solidarity with your fellow workers and learn to control the conditions of your labor—ram it down the boss's throat. ¶ Corporate capitalism's access to your brain is through that dumb tube—unplug your television. Destroy it. Walk away from your TV. Don't watch it. Walk the streets. Learn the people, the problems, the joys and sorrows of your town. Participate. Learn your town, know your neighborhood. Lend a hand where it's needed. Talk to the old people. Don't spend all your time zoned out in front of those dumb machines. Be alive! That's what Joseph Campbell said when he was dying, "All we ever wanted is to be completely human and in each other's company." Don't let that be limited for you, as we spend less and less social time together. —Will Tupper

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War after war after war.

KOREAN-AMERICAN ACTIVISTS BRACE FOR THE ALL-BUT-INEVITABLE NEW KOREAN WAR.

In June of 1994, two men argued for 32 minutes across 14 time zones about a decision that may have led to the deaths of millions. On one end of the line was US President Bill Clinton, and at the other end, then-President of South Korea, Kim Young-Sam. The issue was whether or not North Korea's dictator Kim Il Sung was close to building a nuclear bomb and whether a preemptive air strike by the United States might trigger a North Korean attack on the South and a new Korean War.

President Kim Young-Sam feared a "sea of fire"

would engulf the Korean peninsula and insisted to President Clinton that he would not commit "the historical sin of waging a war" by mobilizing even one of his 650,000 troops should the unilateral United States action demand follow-up on the ground.

Frustrated and effectively thwarted, President Clinton relented. Three days and many more heated long-distance discussions later, Jimmy Carter—who else?—was in North Korea talking peace. His visit with Kim Il Sung ended a nuclear crisis and trig-

gered a series of direct negotiations that led to a peace accord, signed in October of 1994, between the United States and North Korea known as the "Agreed Framework."

Since then almost every tenet of the Agreed Framework has been thwarted, delayed or simply ignored by one side or the other. And today there is a legitimate—if not always well-articulated—fear that war on the Korean peninsula may once again be imminent.

The American antiwar movement—which swelled to enormous numbers during the agonizingly long build up to war with Iraq—has hardly fashioned even a sound bite for the North Korean crisis. But beneath the radar, some Korean-American activists are constructing an

infrastructure for debate and action to save the Korean peninsula from the heartache of continued division, depravation, and the threat of war.

"There is *already* a war going on in North Korea," explains Jay Lee, managing editor of *Chosun Journal*, a website that serves as a portal for information on Kim Jong-il's wicked disregard for human rights in his country, "starvation has been going on for a while." The North Korean government is solely responsible, he insists, for the famine that is said to have claimed millions of lives over the past decade. "The nuke issue has been foremost in the news," he continues, "[but] I'd like to see human rights issues coming to the forefront in



"One good thing about a Republican administration —there's a lot of fodder for bands like us."

BLOWN TO BITS TAKE POLITICAL HARDCORE BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL.

Besides being notorious wisenheimers, Blown to Bits pound out tight, political hardcore. Capable of walking that fine line between political critique and having fun, Blown to Bits has an EP out soon and plans to cross the nation supporting it. I sat down to learn more about where the band stands on both the political songs and the party ones at the infamous Leather Tongue video store in San Francisco's Mission District while the Clash played lovingly in the background.

When you got together, was it more based on the music, or around politics and ideology?

Nick Spelletich: All of it. We wanted to do serious hardcore, which wasn't around a couple years ago.

Patrick Kushtner: There was a void in the whole scene, so we came in at the perfect time. About a week after I quit [his old band, Vlad the Impaler], I ran into Nick. Three days later it was on.

these dealings."

While Jay Lee and the *Chosun Journal* do not put much stock in direct negotiations with Kim Jong-il—the man who they believe deserves all of the blame for North Korea's woes—others active in the Korean-American community think this is too narrow a path.

Eun Sook Lee is a first generation Korean-American working with Young Koreans United, an organization created in 1982 to address critical issues on the Korean peninsula as well as domestic concerns for Koreans living in the United States.

"When we think of North Korea," Eun Sook Lee says from the organization's Los Angeles headquarters, "we

think of the fact that all of us Korean-Americans have ties to North Korea. We all have family in North Korea. Many of us are separated because of it." In fact, for more than 40 years the heavily fortified line along the 38th parallel—better known as the DMZ—separating North and South has forced the division of her own family.

"It has of course brought up a lot of resentment and pain and bitterness." Still, she worries, "those are the people who will really be hurt if there is any attack.

"Look at it as if you were a North Korean," she says. "North Koreans fought against the United States and the United States brought so much destruction against North Korea during the Korean War."

The destruction of the Korean War—or that it happened at all—is often overlooked in recent American history. This classic case of historical amnesia is remarkable given the fact that between 1950 and 1953, 36,000 Americans died trying to fight back the Communist North's invasion of the US-backed South. As many as three million Korean men, women, and children lost their lives in the conflict.

Many South Koreans, particularly those who lived through the Korean War, remember the United States as liberators—a perception that sometimes lends itself to an unquestioning support of the current administration's ambitions.

Ominously, the course for action with North Korea was all but set with President George W. Bush's notorious "axis of evil" State of the Union speech in January 2002, a precedent many older Koreans endorsed.

"My mother-in-law hates Kim Jong-il," Eun Sook Lee says. "When they attacked Iraq she said, 'Why didn't they attack North Korea first?'" However, Lee is quick to point out that when faced with the possible deaths of innocent citizens, her mother "doesn't want that kind of attack on the country itself."

To whittle a country of more than 21 million people down to the awkward form of the bizarre and brutal Kim Jong-il obscures what many

I heard your show last week—a part of Libertatia festival—got shut down by the cops?

Nick: Everything was great the whole day, then the cops showed up, and said “No way, and don’t expect to come back here tomorrow.” It was a typical cop maneuver: you can’t have fun here, get the fuck out.

Jake: It’s been going on every weekend, because all the clubs are getting shut down. There’s nowhere to play, so these kids set up pirate shows.

Patrick: The fest got moved to a house in Oakland, and it was so much fun. It was in this huge kitchen. Kids went nuts.

Jake: It was like going back in time. They did the pyramid in the pit—I haven’t seen that in years and years.

Your lyrics include both global politics and more personal politics, like landlord issues. How much emphasis is on the message?

Patrick: A lot of emphasis. I write most of the lyrics—I get everyone’s input and incorporate it into our general idea. I’m not an anarchist, but I’m very much against our form of government. America goes around imposing democracies—we’re spilling blood for corporate profit. It really is like a death-squad democracy.

Jake: I’d say we’re more against *politics* than anything else—we’re just pissed off. Jim [their ex-singer] kept saying “can’t we have a song that’s not about war? Or cops?” But what else is there? We made

a conscious decision to make a song about drinking beer, but that’s the only one. A party song, I guess.

Patrick: Just to bring it down to a fun level, and not be angry at the world all the time.

Jake: It’s about parties—not just political parties. We don’t want to be preachy.

Music is a really accessible way to get into politics.

Jake: I think all the bands we play with feel the same way, and are on that level. It’s a lifestyle, but it’s also a means of getting your message out there to change things.

Nick: That’s one good thing about a Republican administration—there’s a lot of fodder for bands like us.

Like the Reagan years.

Patrick: People compare us a lot to that era. We’re all from that era—we’ve been around, we’re all older.

Nick: We’re *ancient*.

Patrick: I guess a point I’d like to get across is that we are *sincere* and we try not to be cheesy. We try to keep it current, but something that can hold true through time. I think it will unless there are some serious fucking changes. —Katje Richstaater

see as the only path to peace: direct negotiations.

“You have three options,” Eun Sook Lee explains. “One is to negotiate. Two is to [continue and expand] economic sanctions, which will destroy the country and just drag it out—so much suffering for the people. Three is military strikes.”

This final option is the most distressing one for activists like Eun Sook Lee, who see further destruction on an already war-ravaged and economically decimated country.

Many outside of activist circles seem to agree that the mutually destructive rhetoric exhibited by both Washington and North Korea is quickly painting millions into a deadly corner.

“We may now be faced with only two options,” a long time State Department specialist on Asian affairs recently remarked, “catastrophic war or a nuclear-armed North Korea.”

How the crisis will be resolved—or if it will be resolved—is an issue that deserves careful attention.

“Whatever the future holds will likely develop with high drama, intense emotions, and powerful consequences,” concludes Don Oberdorfer in his essential book, *The Two Koreas*. “Hold on to your hats. Korea is a land of surprises.”

—Jeff Guntzel

The Chosun Journal:
www.chosunjourn.com

Young Koreans United: www.ykuusa.org

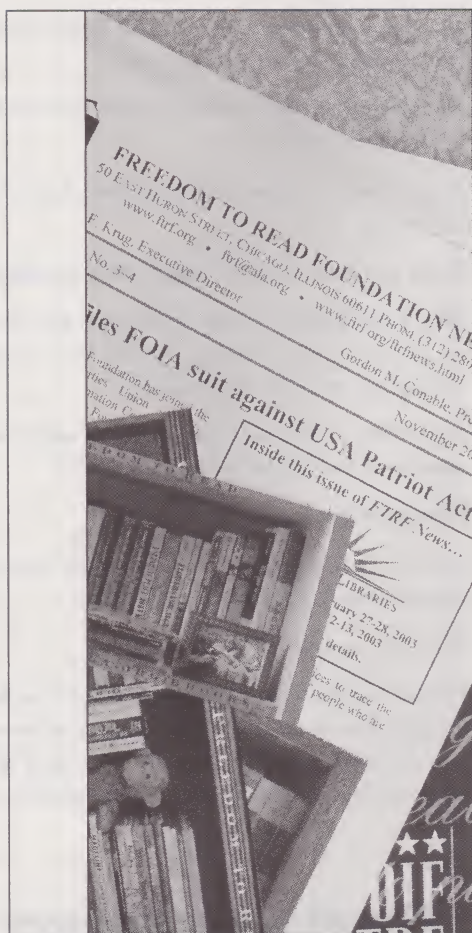
“The stage is always theater, whether the performer embraces that fact or not.”

BREAKING A LEG WITH SAN FRANCISCO’S SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM.

In the late '90s, former members of Bay Area experimental bands Charming Hostess, Eskimo, Idiot Flesh, and Tin Hat Trio came together to form the Sleepytime Gorilla Museum (SGM). Marathon rehearsals led to incendiary live performances noted for their over-the-top theatricality and unique amalgamation of musical styles. From Asian folk music to punk rock, ambient industrial, and metal, SGM has forged a memorable sound transcending the usual limita-

tions of genre, bringing to mind everyone from The Ex and Captain Beefheart to King Crimson and GWAR.

Despite their brutal tour schedule, SGM somehow found the time to release their debut recording, the aptly titled *Grand Opening and Closing*, on Negativland’s Seeland label. Sleepytime’s charismatic front person, Nils Frykdahl, told me—in his own satirical way—some of the off-the-wall thoughts that went into his increasingly respected, innovative band.



"We want our civil liberties preserved."

THE FREEDOM TO READ FOUNDATION TAKES PRIDE IN BEING A THORN IN ASHCROFT'S SIDE.

"It's essential that in this system, people have access to information," explains Beverly Becker, the associate director of the Freedom to Read Foundation. "This is a participatory government so how are you going to participate if you don't know what's going on?"

In these days of Orwellian governmental tactics diminishing our civil liberties, Becker helps run one of the few organizations that is willing to take our government to the highest court in the land to fight for what is most precious: our First Amendment rights.

You might expect this fight to come from protesters out on the streets or on a university campus, but the Freedom to Read Foundation was started by a bunch of librarians, those die-hard, front-line protectors of the First Amendment and the unsung heroes in a turbulent battle with our government.

The organization was created in 1969 by the American Library Association to support and defend librarians as they upheld First Amendment rights. It was a lofty goal that had a humble beginning.

"The executive director of ALA at that time, David Clift, looked at me and said, 'Well, we've set it up. Is anybody going to come to our party?'" remembers Freedom to Read's executive director Judith Krug. "That morning, I received the first check to the Freedom to Read Foundation to the tune of \$600. That was a lot of money in 1965, and I said, 'somebody came to our party.'"

Where does the name Sleepytime Gorilla Museum come from?

From a collective of European ex-patriates who ran a small press in early 20th century New York and staged various provocative "openings" which eventually led to their being less-than-welcome in the post-war atmosphere of fear. The name was carried on by a daughter of the founders, who apparently felt no qualms about using it for her antique store in Tennessee, where it quietly faded from history.

It seems like the band draws from a rich background of Dada musicians and aural surrealists.

The spirit of Dada haunts many of the various "fuck off" gestures in rock, from the nonsense of psychedelia to the design aesthetic of punk to the anti-music of industrial noise. Its oppositional stance is close to our hearts—so close in fact that it turns on itself and we hate our tendency towards bewilderment and yearn to make a music of simple weeping and the enlivening joy of pain. We are obsessed with the fire of all oppositional movements, from anarchism to Mormonism to Satanism to gardening, but we find peace in reaching out in complete acceptance to the assembled

audience. We are 'complexists' striving for simplicity.

Is Sleepytime's musical eclecticism something the band consciously strives for, or is it a reflection of the various influences SGM brings to its songwriting? Sometimes your music comes across as a deliberate collage.

We are certainly not *consciously* collaging styles. I'd hope that our many influences have become an integrated part of a musical vocabulary that can *itself* have a style. Our writing process is often very collaborative, usually with someone directing or "conjuring" a sound out of the group. Dan

Rathbun [SGM's bassist] is the most likely to have fully scored parts. The rest of us make something more like maps at this point. Part of the joy of playing in a deliberately assembled band is coaxing the most idiosyncratic part possible from each player.

Is the theatrical—the spectacle—important to your live aesthetic?

The stage is always theater, whether the performer embraces that fact or not. With the rush of confronting the combined attentions of a room full of people, everyone becomes a different creature. Some stay that way all the

Today, the Freedom to Read Foundation has grown to become a force to be reckoned with, comprised of librarians and lawyers who have teamed up to protect what we are at risk of losing: the right to access information freely. I was lucky enough to spend an afternoon at the Chicago-based offices of the Freedom to Read Foundation where I learned how powerful and inspiring this organization is.

I spoke with Debra Caldwell-Stone, the deputy director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, about the Patriot Act, its impact on civil liberties, and what the Freedom to Read Foundation is doing in response to it.

I've heard a lot about the Patriot Act, but why do you think it is so bad?

I keep being asked questions about "Why does it matter? If you aren't doing anything bad, then who cares?" But who gets to define who the "bad guy" is in these situations? FBI agents appear in our public forums about library rights and the Patriot Act and say, "Trust us. If you're not a bad guy, you don't have to worry." But how do we *know* that? We *can't* know that. ¶ The secrecy that is involved with the Patriot Act is a real problem. Nobody is able to know about it; nobody is able to challenge it in court. The courts that issue these warrants meet in secret and the only parties that appear before the court are the FBI agent and the US attorney prosecuting the case, so it raises almost *no* opportunity for oversight. ¶ They want all the information on us, but they don't want to give us any information on them. They say, "We should have access *just in case* you happen to become involved in a terrorist act." That's the kind of scrutiny, at least in our best moments, we've *never* allowed in this country. The Patriot Act opens up doors to the type of government surveillance that we never thought we would see.

time—at which point they must either become famous or homeless, so they can hold forth at will. While we have nothing against naturalism as it occurs in individuals—some of our best friends are *naturally* naturalistic—we are against it in principle, as it leads to a false-ness and conformity with a "real world" which we find tolerable only for the avenues of departure it always inadvertently provides. For us, the theatrical comes natural.

—Bill Mithoefer

For more information on *Sleepytime Gorilla Museum*, stop by their website at www.sleepytimegorillamuseum.com

"What can I do? I can cook. What can I cook? I can cook soup."

DAVID ANSEL'S DIY SOUP-DELIVERY BUSINESS KEEPS AUSTIN, TEXAS WELL FED.

David Ansel's road to soup stardom started in a cubicle. It was the 30-year-old Austin, Texas man's first day of work at a consulting firm and the fluorescent lights had beaten him. "I looked around and thought, 'I got lost and ended up *here*,'" he remembers.

The days marched on as the hot Austin summers gave

So then what is the Freedom to Read Foundation doing about it?

We have this new proposal [The Freedom to Read Protection Act] in Congress that would exempt libraries and bookstores from the worst provisions of the Patriot Act and make a statement about the importance of free inquiry, which is *really* what we are trying to protect here. You should be able to go into a library or a bookstore and pursue your inquiries without the government looking over your shoulder.

But the Patriot Act is law—what can you do now?

The worst of the Patriot Act does sunset [expire] in 2005. We need to make sure that these laws sunset—they are an aberration. They are something that was used to respond to a particular situation in our history as a country and not as a permanent seating of power to launch. ¶ If you look into any congressional records or history, you'll find testimony as recent as 1995 asking for these powers—pre-dating September 11 by six years! Clearly, they wanted these powers to conduct domestic surveillance on US citizens and they've been asking for them for a *long* time. The opportunity that they used to get it was under the panic and the crisis that was engendered by the September 11 attacks. ¶ You need to let your congressional representatives know that you are interested in these issues and that you are keeping track of them. So that there are actually inquiries into the law in Congress, they hear from a broad range of citizens and not just from law enforcement. When the sunset provisions come up in 2005, citizens need to be there to say, "We don't believe these are necessary. We want our civil liberties preserved." —Janice Dillard

For more on the Freedom to Read Foundation, go to www.ftrf.org

one day," he says. "I thought, 'I'm out of money. What can I do? I can cook. What can I cook? I can cook soup. I can sell soup to people.'"

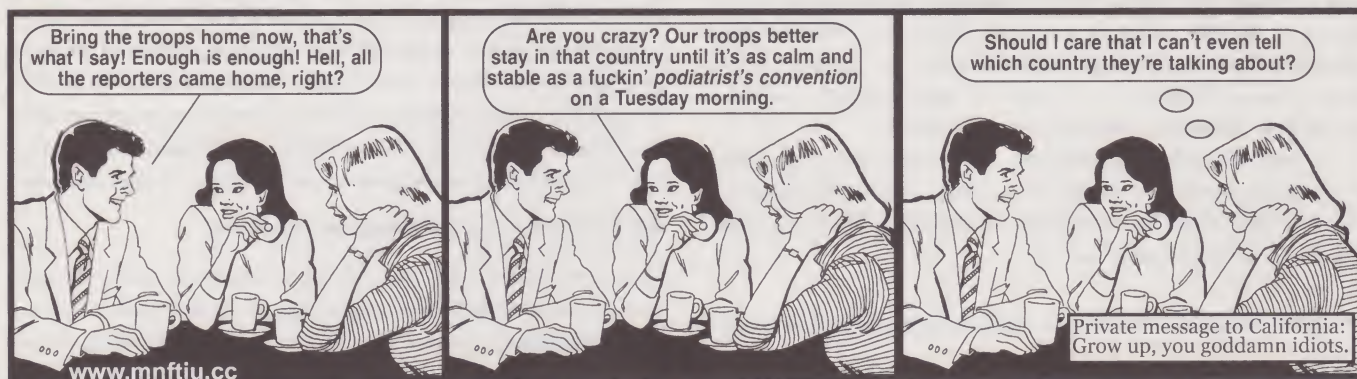
And with that, the yoga instructor/writer/ex-techie started Savory Soul Sustenance, a bicycle-powered soup-delivery business that is as environmentally sound as it is delicious. Ansel's service is brilliant in its simplicity: He makes fresh, delicious soups and delivers them on his bike, rain or shine.

In two years, he has become Austin's legendary Soup Peddler, and Savory Soul Sustenance has become a

way to mild winters, until one spring day, Ansel threw up his hands and bid farewell to the relentless drudgery. There was one problem, however, says Ansel: "I had no savings; no safety net."

He fell hard. With his bank account dwindling to double digits and freelance writing anemic at best, Ansel took stock. "I had a strange idea

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES



small business sensation in the Southwest. He has more than 200 customers, and his waiting list is at least twice as long. He's been the subject of two magazine articles (well, three now) as well as a short film entitled *The Soup Peddler*. And it all began with an e-mail and a dream.

His rise to soup stardom began with a simple missive to friends in which he offered to deliver quarts of soup once a week for a fair price.

Seventeen customers subscribed—Ansel was in business. He bought a 60-gallon pot and enough vegetables for a super-sized portion of his favorite soup, okra gumbo. He delivered, and his subscribers rejoiced.

They told their friends and more "soupies"—as Ansel calls his subscribers—signed up. And though he "had no idea about food safety and was lucky no one died," by the end of his first season, the news of his simple service and delicious recipes spread—he had 48 subscribers.

By his second season the Soup Peddler was operating at full capacity. He bought several more 60-quart pots and relocated to a friend's restaurant kitchen. But fundamentally, the work remained the same. Each week during his delivery season—starting in October and spanning nearly eight months—Ansel makes hundreds of gallons of palate-stimulating soup, most of which are vegetarian.

He uses primarily organic and local produce to cook up a repertoire that spans continents. We're talking Zimbabwean Peanut Stew, Thai Green Curry, Barley Miso, Matzoh Ball Soup, French Sorrel, and Shrimp Gumbo. The list grows as Ansel discovers new recipes.

Since that first day the Soup Peddler has stuck to a strict ideological code:

1. Slow Food: Striving to re-connect people to the food that they eat and the people who make it for them.

2. Reusability: The soups

are delivered in two-quart containers, which Ansel gathers and re-uses each week.

3. Bicycling: To Ansel, the bicycle symbolizes that business can be done with an environmental conscience. He hopes to show that different neighborhoods can be connected into networks that support micro-businesses. "Not to mention that I just hate cars," Ansel growls, "and I'm neurotic about energy and waste. I organize my life to use as little as possible."

There's no doubt that bike-powered "delivery can be hell," but the "soupies" applaud both the service and the end product.

"Dear Mr. Peddler," writes Liz Wonton in a letter to the Soup Peddler website, "that black bean soup was the best thing I ever ate."

"I had the gumbo last night and it was deeelicious. Not a bad rendition of a Southern classic, especially for a Yankee," writes Aaric Eisenstein.

Unexpectedly, children and teenagers are becoming soup converts. "I have mothers that are coming up to me and telling me their teenagers are cooking because of my soup," Ansel says. He also relates the story of Lucy, a local toddler caught pulling a wagon around her backyard. When her mother asked what Lucy was doing, She replied, "I'm playing Soup Peddler."

Going into his third season, the Soup Peddler is building a mini eco-empire. Ansel is in talks with Whole Foods about distribution and writing a Soup Peddler cookbook. He's had invitations to lecture students and businessmen on his endeavor. Not bad for a business he "didn't think it was going to last two weeks."

—Joshua M. Bernstein ©

The Soup Peddler is currently writing Slow and Difficult Recipes from the Soup Peddler, a collection of recipes and essays. You can visit him online at www.souppeddler.com, or wave to him as he crosses a busy Austin intersection.

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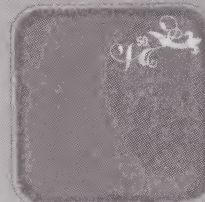
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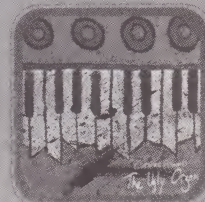
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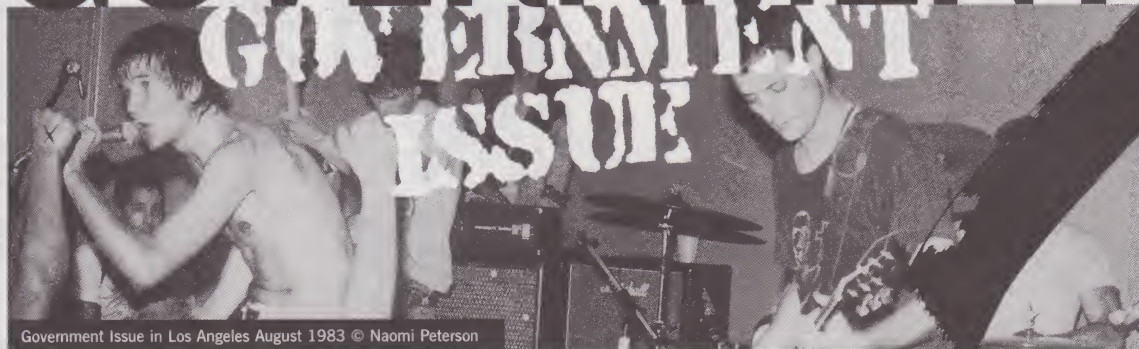


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GOVERNMENT



I was born in 1976. Depending on your age, that may seem somewhat young or relatively old, but one thing is for sure: During the heyday of 1980s punk, I was in elementary school, rocking out to the likes of Quiet Riot, not Bad Brains.

I have numerous older friends who saw Bad Brains, set up Descendents shows in their houses, or saw Hüsker Dü around the time I was in third grade, digging "Round And Round" by Ratt. A few years ago, one friend in particular was startled by my nonreaction when he told me how he had scored a used copy of Government Issue's *Crash* at a record store. He lectured me on the importance of these DC punk pioneers as he walked to his CD player and skipped to track five, "Connecticut."

As the guitarist Tom Lyle played its three opening chords, a spindle top of an untapped bounty burst forth. I began the long, laborious journey of collecting the band's records, dependent on eBay and used record stores to find them.

I started with their later work. There was the self-titled record (aka *GI 5*) from 1986, which I found at Amoeba Records in San Francisco. That marked the beginning of the band's departure from, as vocalist John Stabb Schroeder later described, the "bang and howl" hard core of the early '80s—and cost them fans

because of it. There was 1987's *You*, ordered on eBay from a guy in Germany, the band's first record with drummer Pete Moffett and bass player J Robbins. A melodic-punk masterpiece, it was full of hooks and built a foundation for a sound that would be replicated years later. Then there was 1988's *Crash*, which I purchased from another guy in Germany to replace the copy I burned from my friend.

All my work eventually proved unnecessary, as Dr. Strange Records started rereleasing the band's records a couple of years later. It began with Government Issue, *Complete History Volume One* in 2000, which featured the band's first five records and two EPs. In 2001, *Volume Two* came out, featuring GI's final three records. This year saw the end of the process with the rerelease of the *Strange Wine* EP, packaged with a previously unreleased live album from a 1987 performance at CBGB's.

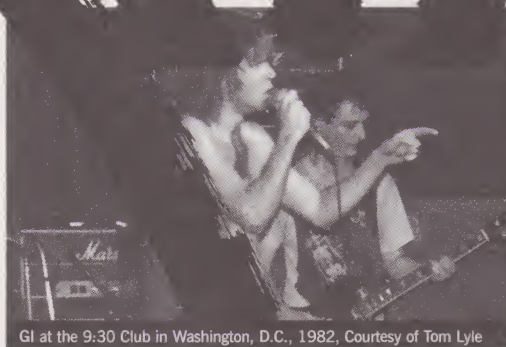
In this, an era of unprecedented hardCore awareness thanks in no small part to Mark Andersen and Mark Jenkins' book, *Dance Of Days*, the rereleases are timed perfectly. But Government Issue lacks prominence in both Andersen's book and many people's perceptions of the 1980s DC punk scene. For a band that lasted nearly a decade in a scene full of notoriously short-lived bands, GI's relative obscurity is curious.

"GI is one of the original DC hardcore bands, and they were very popular, and they are a very important band, but in terms of being kind of the 'cutting edge' kind of band that DC became known for, they weren't that," explains Mark Andersen, "which is not meant to slight them. Cutting edge bands by their nature are extremely rare."

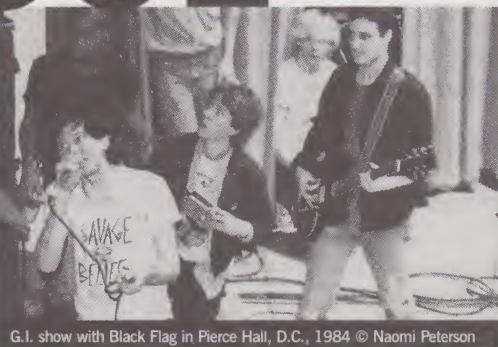
While many DC punk bands experienced a political and personal reawakening, Government Issue made a conscious effort to stay away from that. Vocalist John Stabb Schroeder was an unrepentant smartass who poked fun at the sincerity of a scene that tended to take itself pretty seriously. He wore outlandish clothes on stage and, as Robbins says, "antagonized the populace" during performances. When the independent movement really got going, Stabb sympathized with bands like Hüsker Dü, who signed to a major label. When the DC scene was enthralled with Revolution Summer, Stabb and Government Issue reacted with "Degradation Winter."

"He was performing the essential function of the court jester or the clown, which in the process of making light of something, can share critique and insight," Andersen explains. "John also represented something very important in the sense of the 'everykid' with his playing out

GOVERNMENT ISSUE



GI at the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C., 1982, Courtesy of Tom Lyle



G.I. show with Black Flag in Pierce Hall, D.C., 1984 © Naomi Peterson

of these psychodramas on stage that was very touching for a lot of folks. He's not a rock god; he's the rock anti-god."

Unlike many bands in DC at the time, Government Issue kept going when members quit—and many did. The band went through, by my count, seven bass players, two drummers, and two guitarists, including people such as Brian Baker (formerly of Minor Threat) and Mike Fellows (Rites Of Spring).

"Government Issue is unique in the sense it actually found its way through a myriad of line-ups to its most powerful one, the one it concluded with," Andersen says. "I think it did its best work during those days."

After the departure of bass player JA Leonard and drummer Marc Alberstadt after *GI 5*, the band found Robbins and Moffett. Alberstadt, who left the band due to increasingly serious hearing problems, had been the only original member of the band besides Stabb. But with the new line-up, the band expanded its sound even more, exploring new frontiers in melody, studio techniques (like backwards playback), instrumentation (electric sitar), and vocal harmonies.

"I will say that for people who were skeptics of Government Issue, the result of the gelling of this final unit was not expected," Andersen

says. "There were people who put G.I. down. It's an elitist and kind of snotty approach."

Even with the critical and popular acclaim that followed *You* and *Crash*, the band still suffered in obscurity in the United States, even though they had a decent European following. Then it got worse: They had a bad van accident while on tour in England and they started to unintentionally garner a bit of a neo-Nazi following in the United States (at the end of the live track "Notch In My Crotch" on *Volume One*, you can hear Nazis repeatedly yelling "seig heil" to the band after the song). These setbacks, combined with low tour revenues, conflicting musical aspirations, and other internal tensions, took their toll. The band finally called it quits in 1989, nine years after their formation.

With their breakup, Dutch East India, which had released most of the band's later records under its Giant imprint, effectively stopped printing the records. A European label, We Bite, still produced some of them, though Government Issue claims it received no royalties from those sales—or from Dutch East India after 1989. When the band made plans to rerelease the records, Dutch East India threatened them with legal action. But the band's lawyer determined GI owned the rights and nothing ever became of the threat.

After Government Issue, John Stabb went on to be in numerous bands, none of which reached the same level of recognition as GI. He's currently playing in a band called The Factory Incident and working on a book about Government Issue called *The Evolution Of Sheer Terror*. Tom Lyle went on to record a solo record and occasionally works as a producer. J Robbins founded D.C. post-punk stalwarts Jawbox shortly after Government Issue's demise. Upon the breakup of that band in the late '90s, he co-founded Burning Airlines with Moffett and fellow Jawbox alumnus Bill Barbot. He also does a significant amount of producing, working with bands such as Jets To Brazil, the Promise Ring and many others. Pete Moffett played in Wool and, later, Burning Airlines. He was on tour in Europe with Alanis Morissette when this article was written. Marc Alberstadt gave up music altogether not long after leaving GI.

Fourteen years after their breakup, Government Issue is discovering the staying power of their music—and finding peace with their place in punk-rock history. By phone and by e-mail, members of Government Issue got together for their first interview together since their 1989 breakup.

Interview by **Kyle Ryan**

What were the early days like?

Marc Alberstadt: Those early days were just incredible. Everything was fresh, and there were so many great bands playing every weekend. Every few months or so, a new demo from some band would circulate that would blow everyone away and raise the bar to a new level of musical achievement. Everyone was on their toes to stay creative, with bands like Minor Threat, Bad Brains, and Black Market Baby on the scene. Believe me, there was plenty to be psyched about.

John, you were a pretty iconoclastic frontman, with your outlandish dress, stage antics and sarcasm. What drove you to be that way?

John Stabb: Sadly, it had to do a lot with what was recently diagnosed as ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder]. What me, hyperactive? How would anyone that was once referred to as "the punk rock David Lee Roth" or the "Washington, DC punk-scene weirdo" ever be hyperactive? What a revelation! ¶ Once I got out of high school and put together this punk-rock band, it was my goal to attack the world for all the injustices I'd been put through all my life. Then down the line I discovered someone that was a huge influence on me: Jack Grisham from TSOL. We played a show with them once. I was still dressing drab punk rock and he kind of taught me to go out of my way to wear irritating clothes and totally and completely fuck with your audience. ¶ Having Brian Baker in the band was great until he wanted me to stop wearing goofy clothes because we weren't being taken seriously as a punk rock band—just because Glen Danzig told him that. How ironic is that? Here's a guy who's in a band with guys that look like they're extras in a *Sabrina And The Groovie Ghoules* cartoon and they're giving me fashion tips?

You had a good time being so aggressive on stage, even though you say you were a pretty withdrawn person off-stage.

Stabb: GI for me was a big outlet. It was a primal-scream thing and a therapeutic thing. Onstage I'd let all this stuff out and then I'd go back to my normal life and be depressed. For that 45 minutes to an hour, it was my own world, and I got into it and

had a blast with it, and people enjoyed it and that was great. If they didn't, I got into it anyway. So I basically did my thing and didn't care if they hated me.

Was it exhausting to go up night after night and play the songs that were inspired by such pain?

Stabb: It was both exhausting and comforting. Being in steady punk group like GI helped give me an outlet. If I never had that outlet I would've been in serious trouble. I'd be in a dead-end life with a wife and children I didn't love and a job I hated. That or in a mental institution. I have been a very troubled person most of my life.

You guys also had a good time mocking a very serious DC scene.

Tom Lyle: It was very humorless, and we thought that was quite funny.

Stabb: I was definitely a really cynical fuck with other people in the DC scene. With the "Revolution Summer" thing, I thought there were some really cool bands—I loved Rites Of Spring and Embrace—but I didn't believe in making this sort of quick political statement the way all these other bands were. GI, Scream, and Marginal Man were the punk-rock dinosaurs that weren't allowed to be part of the club. They had Revolution Summer, so I called our thing the "Degradation Winter" and just went out of my way to mock it. I went out of my way to take the piss out of things when they got way too serious.

At the time, DC was notorious for having short-lived bands. How did you guys manage to stick it out for close to a decade?

Lyle: A lot of that was because if you lost a member, that was the end of the band. But we weren't like that. Our bass player would leave and we would just get another one. We felt like Government Issue was more of a concept than the actual people in it. Replacing the entire rhythm section as we did and ending up with Pete and J was probably one of the best things that ever happened to us.

When do you think the band was at its peak?

Lyle: I guess 1987, when we recorded the *You* album. When it was happening, we didn't even realize it was happening.

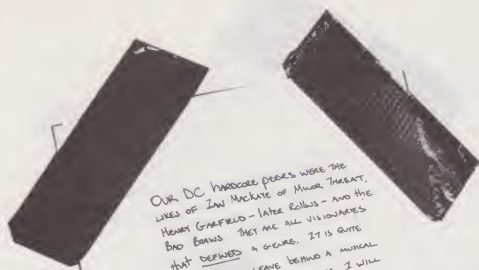
J Robbins: I think *Joyride* and *The Fun Just Never Ends* are still the apex of GI's recorded output. Our lineup reached for a lot of things on record that we didn't always really achieve, but those two records are unqualified successes—totally ragingly powerful and very musical at the same time. Anyway, I can't help feeling this way—it's hard to outdo records that influenced you so much.

J, you've said before that you didn't think you were part of Government Issue's best line-up. Why?

Robbins: The first punk show I ever went to, in 1984, was a GI show. I was a huge fan of *Joyride* and *The Fun Just Never Ends*—those were two of the first hardcore records I ever owned and they literally helped form my idea of punk rock. I still think those records are amazing. So when I joined the band, I had a lot to live up to in my own mind. When I hear the stuff that we did on *You* and *Crash*, though I'm proud of it and I remember the times with great fondness, I also hear myself struggling to learn how to play bass, write and arrange songs—and not always succeeding.

What was the writing dynamic like when you joined the band? Did you and Pete feel like the "new guys"?

Robbins: The personal dynamic between John and Tom was pretty crazy regardless of whomever else was in the picture, but they were really upfront about how psyched they were to have new blood in the band. It was much more egalitarian than I expected and they let me contribute a lot more than I thought they would. ¶ John's part always came last. The songs were never written around vocal ideas, because in actual performance, John was such a lunatic that it would have been impossible to count on him to cue anything or ever be the musical backbone. Pete and I got really into singing harmonies, and that became our territory, because it was the first time that GI had that. So initially it was sort of easy because it was just Tom and Pete and me getting to know each other. But I was definitely the young kid, the most in a position to learn rather than lead.

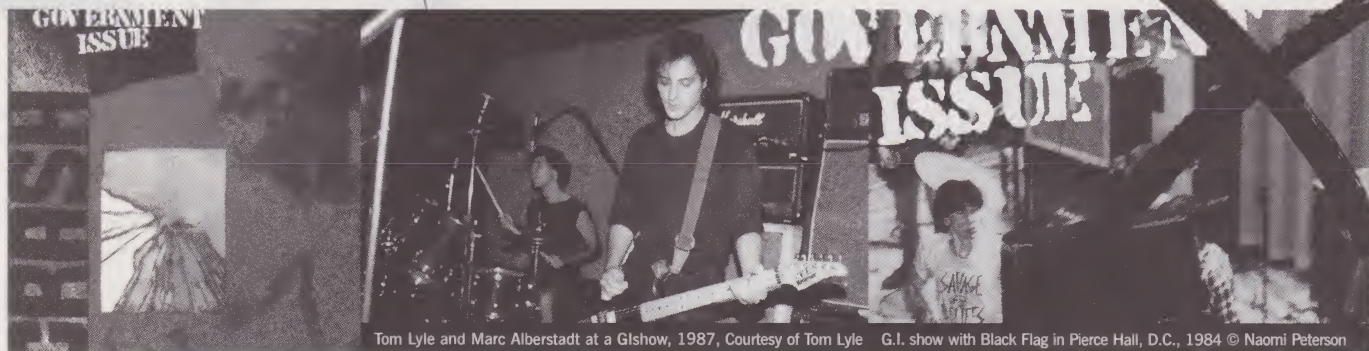


OUR DC hardcore peers were the
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GI had tenacity! After the first wave of the DC hardcore scene fell apart—the Bad Brains split for New York, Henry left to join Black Flag, and Minor Threat broke up—the whole DC scene became very dead, and GI was a real catalyst in keeping the momentum of the scene going.



Tom Lyle and Marc Alberstadt at a Gishow, 1987, Courtesy of Tom Lyle G.I. show with Black Flag in Pierce Hall, D.C., 1984 © Naomi Peterson

How was the dynamic between Tom and John weird?

Robbins: Any time two people have had a creative partnership for that long, they develop a particular language between them, which is often hard for newcomers to decipher. I feel like saying their dynamic was "crazy" sounds a little uncharitable, and it's not meant that way. I'm cracking myself up trying to talk about this now because I just bought the *Spinal Tap* DVD, and I keep falling back into Tap-speak. You know, they were two distinct types of visionaries: John was like fire, and Tom was like ice, which I guess makes me—and all eight other bass players—lukewarm water.

What was it like playing with Pete again in Burning Airlines? Certainly you had a lot more experience by that point, but did the old days come up much?

Robbins: GI at its best was such a pure, unified, wall-of-guitar type of sound, and BA at its best really embraced a kind of musical schizophrenia. And musically—at least to communicate ideas—yeah, we were both much more on the same level than we

had been before. In GI, Pete was a real mentor to me. I guess the GI experience was always kind of a background feature that we drew on occasionally, anecdotally. There were times it was funny to be playing in a city or venue where we had had some GI misadventure. But going that far back together was one of the main reasons I wanted to be in a band with Pete again in the first place.

GI was one of the most enduring of the DC bands at the time, but it doesn't seem like GI's legacy is as prominent as other DC bands. Why do you think that is?

Lyle: That's because we weren't as good.

Alberstadt: Well, our DC hardcore peers were the likes of Ian MacKaye of Minor Threat, Henry Garfield—later Rollins—and the Bad Brains. They are all visionaries that defined a genre. It is quite difficult to leave behind a musical legacy greater than theirs. I will say this, though: GI had tenacity! After the first wave of the DC hardcore scene fell apart—the Bad Brains split for New York, Henry left to join Black Flag, and Minor Threat broke up—the whole DC

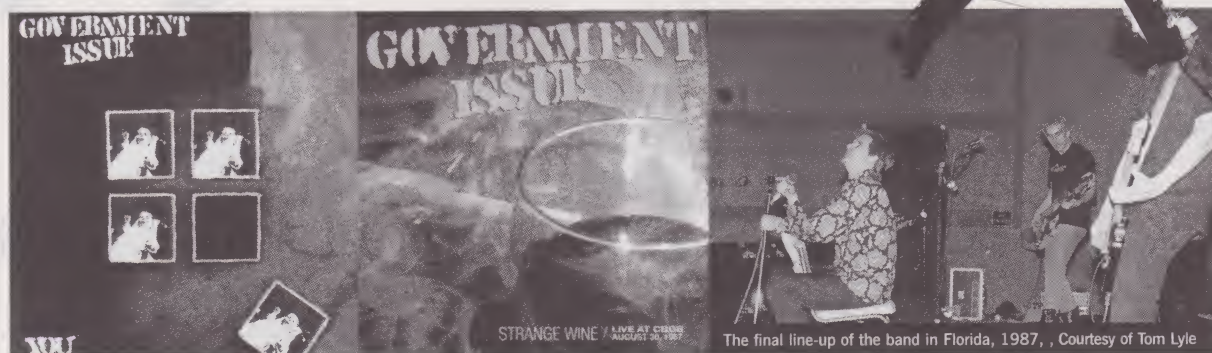
scene became very dead, and GI was a real catalyst in keeping the momentum of the scene going. It was not an easy period. During this dormant period, new DC bands formed and rehearsed, and a new bunch of great DC bands eventually emerged from all the break ups. GI was the glue that kept the whole thing afloat.

But it seems even those bands that came later or the ones that self-destructed receive more recognition than GI. For instance, in *Dance Of Days*, GI's not mentioned all that much.

Lyle: You gotta remember *Dance Of Days* is written by Mark Andersen and a lot of the perspective in the book comes from bands' political involvement. We didn't really step out in that arena as much as we were trying to sustain our energy through touring and recording. Certainly, from our perspective, we were as involved as you could be in any sort of scene. We were constantly touring and playing and recording as much as we could for our own cause, which was Government Issue.

Robbins: "DC" has always meant "Dischord" to people from out of town,

John was so sarcastic and so ridiculous at a time when a lot of other people were either getting really political or exploring an almost painful kind of sincere intensity. Ultimately, GI was never fashionable, and I think that goes a long way to account for the band's slowly but surely dropping out of the official history of DC punk.



The final line-up of the band in Florida, 1987, Courtesy of Tom Lyle

and GI sort of took themselves out of the immediate Dischord scene early on. The band always had a real "outsider" attitude. But I also think GI didn't go out of the way to stand for anything; it was a really good band, but it was just a *band*, period. Whereas there were major changes happening in the attitudes around punk rock in DC, a politicization that some people really identified with and others resented. Something grew out of that, which was larger than the music or the identity of any particular band, and that is the kind of thing that stays with people in a bigger, more lasting way than music. ¶ Another thing is that John was so sarcastic and so ridiculous at a time when a lot of other people were either getting really political or exploring an almost painful kind of sincere intensity. Ultimately, GI was never fashionable, and I think that goes a long way to account for the band's slowly but surely dropping out of the official history of DC punk.

Why did it end?

Stabb: I think Bob Mould described it best when he described why Hüsker Dü fell

apart: It was like a train out of control and he jumped off before they crashed. I felt that way too about GI. I think if I had stuck it out even one more year, I would have been very close to being suicidal because it just got to be a depressing thing. Everybody was also having creative differences, the running cliché of being in bands.

Lyle: One of the major reasons why is because we were underappreciated, I think. I remember being in rehearsal toward the end and talking about offers that we were getting to play shows in the US. I particularly remember this example that we were trying to get a small, Midwest tour going, and we were getting offers of like \$200, \$300 for a show and stuff like that. We thought that was ridiculous, and we thought it wasn't worth it anymore. ¶ Musically we were splitting, too. Everybody in the band was having their own ideas about how we should go musically. We were constantly at odds with that.

Robbins: I think we all felt it running out of steam, and those guys especially were frustrated that after having done this thing for so long, they were still always broke and

toiling in total obscurity. But we were talking about how to sort of scale it down, or if we should do a couple more tours and then pack it in. I remember Pete saying "If we're going to break up, we should just do it," so we could get on with whatever else our individual lives might hold.

How important is the band's legacy to you?

Lyle: It's not important, it's not important. But I wish that more people would get a chance to hear us. I can't say that I wish more people would *like* us because I have no control over that.

Stabb: I think we were successful because we toured Europe twice, and the first time we did it, we broke even on our plane fare for the trip. We played about two-and-a-half months all over the continent. Then we came back and had terrible, terrible luck: We flipped over in vans, we had a Nazi following, we had a full-scale riot at a show. It got to be like, "OK, is this worth it anymore?" ¶ So many people tell me "You guys never got your due." But I still see our names referenced in books and magazines and all that stuff. I'm happy with having a

cult following rather than having this huge, monumental success that Henry Rollins or Ian MacKaye has had—because with that, they've also had all this other crazy insanity and kids worshipping them to the point that it's kind of scary. I don't get the same kind of insane, psychotic nutbag who's in dire need of a therapist more than myself or the psycho letters Henry Rollins gets. I sort of get the hand-me-down psycho letters—and thank god for that.

John, you've said that you don't want GI to be the one thing you're known for, but at the same time, with your book and the rereleases, you're sort of bolstering that perception.

Stabb: I don't mind talking about it with people on the street or at clubs—I'm completely approachable about that—but I definitely don't want it to be the end-all be-all. I don't want people to think that it's the only creative thing that's been in my life. I want to continue and do other things, like I've done with The Factory Incident. I want to show that's a whole different side of me, and I can actually progress in my life as opposed to fall back and milk it for all it is.

Anything you would change or any regrets?

Alberstadt: I wish we could have had more time to record.

Stabb: I look at everything as being learning experiences, good or bad.

Lyle: I can't think of a thing. We did the best we could. We thought we were as good as any other band that was out there at the time. If someone said to us, "Just do this one thing, and you'll become as popular as Minor Threat or Rites Of Spring," I don't know if we would have done it. We were doing what we thought was right. We wanted to make ourselves happy, musically and lyrically. We weren't doing it to become the biggest band in the world or to be remembered 20 years later.

But you are remembered 20 years later. Looking back at it all, what release stands out the most for you?

Stabb: I love the *You* album, and I've come to terms with *Crash* over the past five years. *Crash* was actually made to fit radio airplay. When we were in the studio, they'd put little speakers next to a radio and would go,

"OK, that will fit the radio. It's the same kind of level."

Robbins: *Crash* is basically a Hard Rock record, not my favorite kind of music. And as far as my contribution to that record, I felt I was much more aware of what I was trying to do, and I imagined I was making something quite different from what it ultimately turned out to be. But, ultimately, I guess I'd pick *You*.

Lyle: *You* is my favorite. It's when musically we really pulled it together, a consistent record from beginning to end. I can listen to that record from beginning to end—other records, I skip through parts.

Alberstadt: The band took too many directions for me to provide one favorite. As a classic hardcore band, my favorite record is *Boycott Stabb*. It is a record that very well represents that genre, done by a band at the top of its hardcore period game, with complete passion and focus. It is a fun record. ¶ GI experimented in many different directions later on, with varying degrees of success. My favorite record outside of the pure hardcore mold is *You*, despite the fact that I do not play on it. *You* had very strong songwriting and had great performances by every member in the band, in particular Pete's virtuoso drumming. The production values were unusually high for that pre-digital period, and overall, I never understood why *You* didn't cross over big time. I think GI at that stage was basically a band ahead of its time. Go listen to that record and then look at the release date if you don't believe me.

What's it like having all this material available to the public for the first time in years? Do you cringe at all listening to the old stuff?

Stabb: I think it's really cool that, years after the fact, Dr. Strange is re-releasing all our stuff, and that Tom Lyle and I are finally both making a profit 20 years after the fact, because we got screwed.

Lyle: I find listening to *Volume Two* a lot easier than listening to *Volume One*. Some people tell me differently, and I just don't understand that.

Robbins: I generally avoid listening to anything I have played on because, more often

than not,—especially with stuff from so long ago—I fall into that creepy, unfun self-critical mode—and it's a little too late now to do anything about it! But I do appreciate how comprehensive the new releases are. I appreciate that they're doing them at all.

Alberstadt: I have very vivid memories of the incredible live audience response we would get, so I think that GI, during my tenure, was a much, much better live act than the recordings represent. There are some records that I and the rest of that lineup played very well on, and unfortunately, they were the worst recorded ones.

Were you worried at all that any of those old labels would come after you for re-releasing the material?

Lyle: This is *our* stuff. Let 'em come after us! What are they going to do, sue us? What are they going to get? Fuck 'em. Government Issue isn't that big of a band where anybody cares. That's what it comes down to.

How did GI affect the subsequent bands you were in?

Stabb: It's been a burden and a blessing, man. The GI stigma follows me everywhere. It's tough to do anything a bit different musically without the GI name being brought up.

Robbins: GI was like Rock Band 101 for me. They taught me everything about playing in a band, from "the bass player should listen to the kick drum" on up. And they made it possible for me to learn how much fun I could have doing this sort of thing instead of just dreaming about it. They also gave me some of my first lessons in group psychology. And thanks to GI, I have firsthand experience of riots and van accidents. ¶ I remember how amazing it felt when we got the first copies of *You*—we were on tour, and we got a package at a friend's house, and there I was, for the first time in my life, holding a record that I actually played on. That's a feeling I hope never to forget. I guess I ultimately figured out that there were things I wanted to try musically that GI couldn't have satisfied, but I would have never gotten to that point without the GI experience. I owe those guys a lot. ©

TV On The Radio's debut, an EP called *Young Liars*, is something unlike anything I've ever heard. It's a post-millennium portrait of the American psyche under Orange Alert, a landscape of alienation and impending doom wrapped in a tapestry woven from soul, hip hop, dance beats, and rock'n'roll.

The recording's graceful sheen, imparted by member Dave Sitek (who has produced records by the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the Liars, among others), belies the songs' beginnings in kitchen beatbox sessions and "stupid ideas taken seriously"—the shotgun creative process that only becomes apparent when TVOTR confronts you live.

Onstage, the songs are recreated from scratch using guitars, synths, and vocal fragments looped upon themselves through the equipment-filled briefcases the band hunches over. As the loops build up on top of each other and the band guides the songs through seeming telepathy into a perfect cacophony, you can't help but want to be in a band just like that.

It was after two days of back-to-back listens to *Young Liars* that I saw TVOTR onstage for the first time, deconstructing and re-imagining their songs at sound check before the second of their two shows opening for the Fall at Chicago's Empty Bottle. After their check, I sat down with Sitek and Tunde Adebimpe—whose amazing voice lends a humanizing soul to *Young Liars*—to learn the madness behind TV On The Radio's method and about how much time two men can put into making computers talk dirty.

Interview by **Miles Raymer**
Photos by **Jen Knee**

How did the band get started?

Tunde Adebimpe: The first stuff we did together was painting—Dave had moved into this loft I lived in with his brother and a couple of other people and we made paintings and sold them on the street. When he moved in, he brought a *ton* of musical equipment with him. It surrounded his bed—it was just like the Terrordome. ¶ I had a bunch of four-track stuff that I had made but had never really played for anybody—I thought it was pretty terrible. Dave said he had a bunch of stuff he never played for anyone too, and so we just sat there and went through all our tapes. At the

end of it, we were like "It's *not* horrible—we should make music together." And we started to do just that.

Dave Sitek: When we started writing shit, we were in our kitchen beatboxing and singing all the guitar parts—shit like that. I have a ton of equipment, but we didn't even get into that at first. It was more like us listening to tapes of stuff and making new versions of it. When we got the Mini-Disc hooked up, we pulled everything we had that was electronic into the same room and just piled it all up. We started making shit up as we went along. After a while, we started involving other friends of ours to beatbox, play pianos, saxophone, flute or whatever. We went to this hyper-ultra-decadent bar called the Stinger and we decided to just get gigs even though we didn't have any songs or a setlist or anything.

Tunde: We'd improvise.

Dave: It was like making something out of nothing all the time. We figured that everyone's so fucked up on hype drinks and nudity and heat that we would just go for broke. It was like glorified karaoke, really, except that we changed the words.

Tunde: As I remember it we were kind of like, "OK, let's do *this*, da da da," But then the terrorists came into play and we were like, "Fuck *everything*—we'll just lock ourselves in and play music."

Dave: After September 11, there was no work, no hope, no *anything*. No one was ready to recover, really, or do *anything*—everyone was paralyzed in New York. Our loft was full of music equipment and paint and art shit and it was the only place we could go and not be reminded of stuff. We pretty much actively ignored what was going on in the world for a month solid, and we started coming up with songs. ¶ Most of our songs are stupid experiments that we wind up taking very seriously. A lot of what we do is make shit up and the first thing that's not dumb, we grab onto and elaborate on it—then we get into *plenty* more dumb stuff. We did this one song that had this one sample we had made with some horns and we had the Macintosh start talking about robots fucking. It got

totally out of hand, but it didn't stop us. Even though it was a profound waste of time, we just kept at it. ¶ What was really funny was that through all these songs about robots fucking at the mini-mall and all these asinine songs, we started making these *really* dark songs, because the world was creeping in, even though we were trying to ignore it. That's when we started making an actual record. I had gotten all this equipment for the Liars' new record and I didn't know how to use it, so I figured what better way to test it out than to take these ideas and put them on this machine and see if we can work it. ¶ We started getting addicted to these green pedals. I'm not going to advertise for them, but they are these Line 6 Delay Modelers. They give you the ability to record something and to loop it, but you can't save it, which is right up our alley because it forces us to have a different way of doing it every single time. I got one of those and then we got another one and we just kept plugging those into other looper pedals. ¶ We forced ourselves to learn these songs on the kitchen-beatbox level until it became what we're doing now, which is making electronic music without the advanced capabilities of sequencing. I couldn't be bothered to learn MIDI, so I got these pedals instead. It's more fun because we can't save anything so anything can happen. It's kind of our MO: you can't really build models of anything because you never know how long it'll last. With the loop pedals we know it'll last 14 seconds and then it's gone and you have to make something else.

With the way you approach your songs, it seems like they must change a lot from show to show.

Dave: It's the thing that makes it interesting. I have all this software and samplers, but in this arena it's really about our relationships with each other and with the songs that makes the whole thing fly. It gets boring to do things the same way. We've all been in situations where you start hesitating after a while and drop out completely. This is our way of keeping things alive and fresh for us. There's really no telling where things will go.

TV ON THE RADIO

Most of our songs are stupid experiments that we wind up taking very seriously.



Tunde: I don't want to be 65 and onstage somewhere playing *Young Liars*.

Dave: I don't think we're capable of playing "Jumping Jack Flash" 3,000 times in our lifetime. It's just not where we come from or where we're going. You listen to recordings of musicians interacting at the Vanguard in New York in the '60s and they're yelling at each other and getting excited, and that, to me, is the point of making music—for it to be alive. To me, that works out perfectly, philosophically, with this band. Everything from caffeine to a subway ride can affect our music, and we really get caught up in it. Instead of resisting it we just do music anyway, and however it turns out is however it turns out.

Everything from caffeine to a subway ride can affect our music, and we really get caught up in it.

It seems ironic that groove-oriented music descended from such improvisational roots, but now it's step-sequencing, which is the least amount of flex you can have with a groove. It's all forethought in dance music. You guys are doing similar music, but there are so many variables on stage.

Dave: I think that the advent of recorded music allowed people to experience music in an artificial sense. It took the dependence off of the artist in a weird way—like, "Charlie Parker? Fuck him, I've got him on record." [laughs] Now you can re-create that moment at any time you want, but at one point musicians were part of a bigger community—you had to go see them and be part of that experience. It wasn't like you could call up Beethoven and have him come over if you were having a dinner party. But now you can sit on the toilet and listen to Goretzky's Third Symphony. For us, if you listen to our record, you don't know what we're going to make of it, and we hope it keeps it interesting for everyone. It keeps it interesting for me.

Earlier you were talking about September 11 and how that affected you—how you found refuge in your loft. Do you think that your music is a reflection of that, or is it an attempt to move away from it, to deflect the terror?

Dave: I think we dove into it hook, line, and sinker. I'm not going to speak for everyone in Brooklyn at that time, but all of the people that we're friends with, it was the first opportunity that they'd had to say, "OK, everyone older than us fucked all of it up and there's nothing we can do." ¶ During all of this I was on the phone with one of my friends and he asked me "What's in your pockets right now?" I was like, "What are you talking about?" But he insisted that I empty my pockets. I had a cigarette lighter and some weed and stuff. He said, "How much money do you have?" I had 32 dollars. He said, "Dave, you have 32 bucks, what the fuck are you going to do about terrorism?" That mentality—that feeling of powerlessness—kind of had this weird transference with everyone we knew. They stopped believing in all these other plans that had to do with all these other people

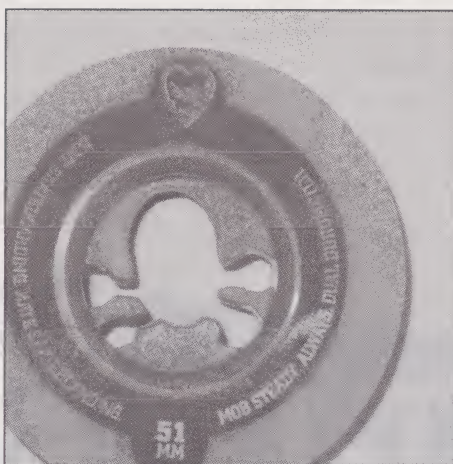
and they were forced to really examine what they were doing. ¶ I think that in particular *Young Liars* is a recognition that we've been deceived by believing other people are going to work it out. We had a solid example—a living, breathing, stinking, burning example—of how all of those people led us astray. We weren't in control of our own shit and so all of those songs are a product of examining our relationship with ourselves. ¶ It was a good thing. It forced people to find the one thing that mattered to them. It was good for creative people all around, not just our band. In such a short period of time, people who were previously walking around wondering if they should change their sneakers because they stink, all of a sudden something else took precedence over that. That you may not have a lot of time left didn't occur to a lot of people in our area until there was the scent of death and the sight of violence and propaganda on TV. It was out of control and everyone felt powerless.

Tunde: Another thing that led to me just wanting to stay inside during that time was just going outside and seeing how quickly Manhattan turned into a giant flag. It was probably the most frightening thing in the world for me. The act was frightening enough, but the mass reaction . . .

How do you think your reaction, emotionally and musically, differs from the sort of retreat into decadence of electroclash and the "Party tonight because you might die tomorrow" feeling that seems to permeate a lot of the work coming out of New York now. Or is it the same thing?

Tunde: I don't think it's the same thing. If I have any sense at all that I'm not going to be around tomorrow, I get very introspective. If there's a meteor heading towards earth, I'm not going to grab someone in a pink skirt and be like, "Let's do some lines!" [laughs] I'm going to sit there like, "OK, what now?" I know it sounds stupid, but I'd probably just sit there and wait for it, and just kind of be like, "What was cool about being human and alive? I have my friends, and I've fallen in love a couple of times, and that never works out for everyone, but it's cool." ©

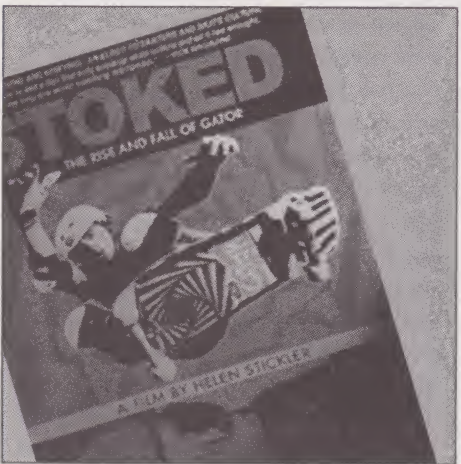




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PAINT IT BLACK



I got out of the car and walked the rest of the way to the emergency room. I just walked in there and told them, "I think I might be having a stroke."

Veterans of the hardcore scene have witnessed countless changes over the years. Yet at the same time—as the latest fashions, gossip and musical styles come and go—the more it seems that this genre is cyclical in nature.

Doubt it? Just ask Paint It Black's Dan Yemin. The Philadelphia-based frontman—as well as former guitarist for Lifetime and Kid Dynamite—has spent over two decades of his life immersed in the pleasures and shortcomings of hardcore. No longer a kid anymore, Yemin's latest artistic vision has gone the opposite direction a lot of the scene is headed. Gone is the melody and chugga-chugga crunch associated with his previous outfits. Instead—as one of the songs on the band's debut *Jade Tree* full-length CVA indicates—what remains is, fittingly, "Less Decide, More Minor Threat."

This stripped-down sound ("There are already all these layers between the real, raw experience, and the expression. I prefer to strip away those layers," Yemin says.) comes not from simply two decades of genre-pushing, but instead from a very-real near death experience that came after the breakup of Kid Dynamite. At age 32, Yemin had a stroke. It caused him to re-think every aspect of his life: his career as a psychologist, his marriage, and his relationship to hardcore.

To say that Yemin emerged a changed man is to put it lightly. It's best that he tell the story.

Interview by **Brian Peterson**

Illustration by **Dustin Mertz**

Not too long after Kid Dynamite broke up, you had a really life-shattering experience—what happened?

About a year after our last show I had a stroke.

Jesus! What did you do?

It was pretty terrifying to say the least! I went numb down the entire left side of my body. If you drew a line from the top-middle part of my scalp straight down the middle, my entire left side went numb! Not totally numb—it was almost like when you've had a cavity filled and the novocaine starts to wear off. I could feel pressure, but if you pinched me or stuck me with a pin, I couldn't feel it.

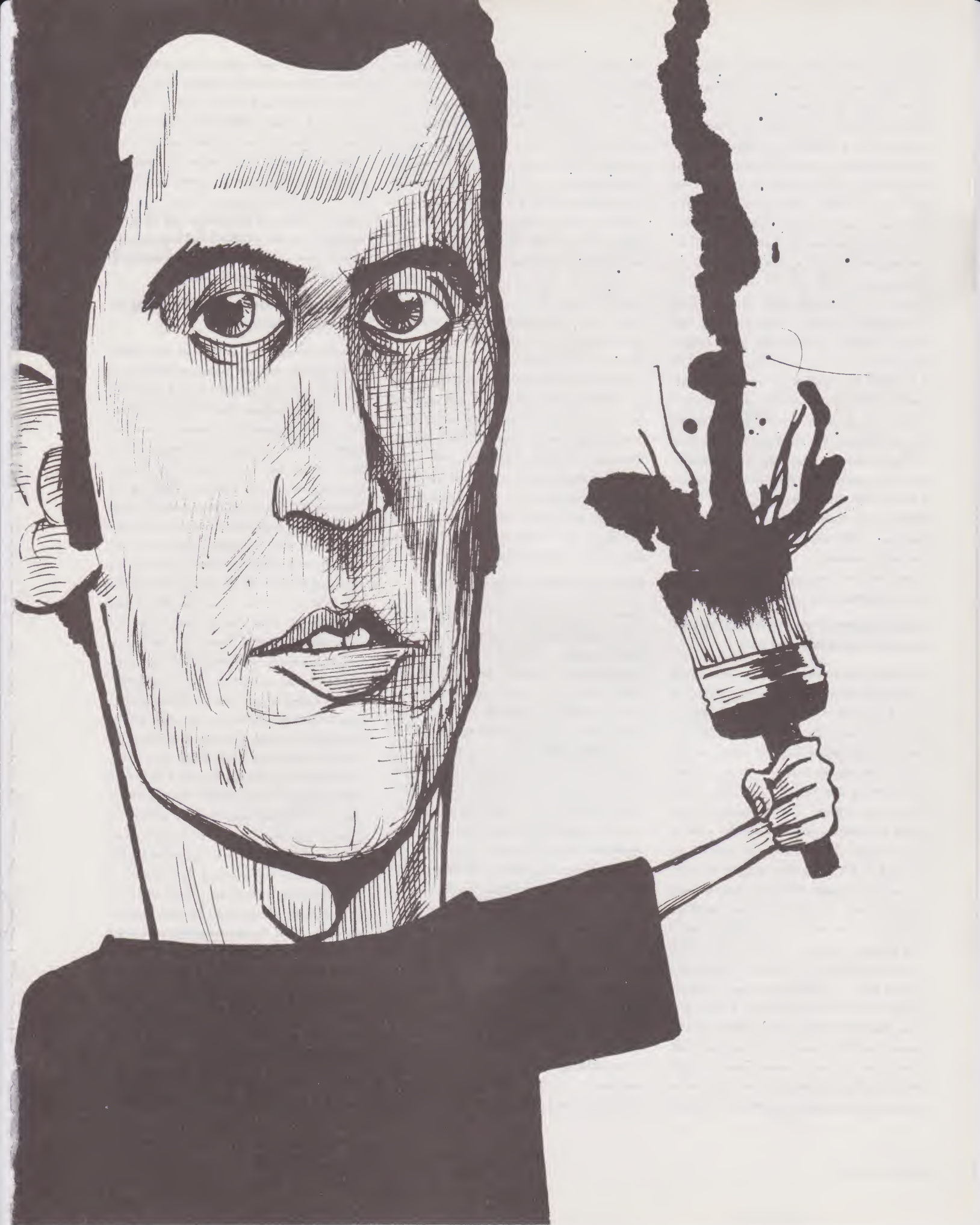
Where were you at when this went down?

Actually, I was at the gym working out and I started to feel weird. I felt uneasy and kind of sick. I figured that since it was the first hot day of the year and the air conditioning was broken that I was just dehydrated. So I took a shower and drank a gallon of water and went back to work and felt a little better, but something was still kind of off. I started poking around my body and realized that I felt off because I was numb. ¶ I was scared and I sensed that something was very wrong. I went to the doctor the next morning. He thought it was a kind of migraine where, instead of headaches, you get other neurological symptoms. Migraines run in my family, so it seemed a

fairly reasonable and much less scary conclusion than the others. ¶ The next day I went back to work and I started slurring my speech. That's when I knew that there was a real neurological problem. I'm a psychologist, and I know enough neuropsychology to know that if you're going numb and the part of your brain that controls motor function and speech stops working properly, something is *seriously* wrong. I canceled the rest of my appointments that day and went straight to the emergency room. ¶ The trip to the hospital turned into this ridiculous comedy of errors. I wanted to go to a specific hospital in Philly where my doctor works, but the ambulance refused to take me there and would only take me to one certain hospital. I was working at a university at the time and called campus security and they wouldn't take me there either—they told me to get a cab! So, one of my co-workers ended up canceling the rest of his day and took me down there. Then there was a parade going on in the city and we got stuck in traffic about 10 blocks from the hospital! Finally, I got out of the car and walked the rest of the way to the emergency room. I just walked in there and told them, "I think I might be having a stroke."

How did they respond?

They ushered me right in. The scary thing was that I was alone. The woman I was married to at the time was in Ecuador for three months working in the rain forest and my



family is in New York and New Jersey, so, I was right there by myself with the idea that there might be something terribly wrong with my brain! I knew that the worst-case scenario for a stroke is permanent loss of some cognitive or motor function, so it was really scary! ¶ The first thing they did was give me an MRI, which is the Magnetic Resonant Image of your brain. They put me in this tube and they told me, "Okay, you're going to be in there for about 20 minutes—try to lay still." I said to myself, "20 minutes? I can do that." So, what I did was sing the Gorilla Biscuits album, *Start Today*, from the horns at the beginning to the last note of "Cats and Dogs." [laughs] As I finished they pulled me out, which was perfect. That's like the good, punk-rock version of the story. [laughs] ¶ Afterwards, we went back to the emergency room. And at that point, even though intellectually I knew something was going on in my brain, I'm still the shiny, happy optimist, who's thinking the doctor was going to come in and say, "Oh, your tests were clear! It's probably something minor." Instead, he came back in and said, "We're admitting you to intensive care—you had a stroke."

What went through your mind when he actually laid out those words for you?

Absolute terror! What happens in a stroke is that you form a blood clot somewhere in your body and it breaks off and travels to your brain and blocks the blood flow to a certain part depending on where it gets stuck. This means that part of your brain isn't getting any oxygen, and that's what causes the damage. Certain parts of your brain can start to die *really* quickly without any oxygen. In my case, it must have blocked it for a certain amount of time, caused the damage, and then cleared. I was trying to keep in mind that some functions in the brain are redundant, meaning that if you damage one part of your brain, there might be another part that can compensate for the loss . . . Suffice it to say, I was just *really* scared and felt *really* alone. ¶ On top of that, they had to figure out where the clot came from. If it came from someplace vital, like my heart, it could mean there is a slight hole or scrape in the wall of the heart or an artery, which is really dangerous. They did

an ultrasound of my head and my neck and heart. At one point they had me swallow an ultrasound instrument because they can get a better view of your heart from inside your esophagus! They have to numb you up so you don't choke—that was pretty terrifying! I was drugged out of my mind and felt like I was being choked! ¶ Then they needed to check my neck, so they put me back in the MRI machine and they were like, "This one's going to take about an hour or so." I was like, "Fuck, I don't know any punk record to sing along to that's that long!" [laughs] They also needed to keep my neck immobilized, so they strapped this Hannibal Lecter mask over my face to keep my head from moving. After I was in there for about 45 minutes—after I'd sang the full Minor Threat discography and started into the Bad Brains—I started freaking out. I started to imagine that I was never going to see my family again and that I was going to die inside this tube. I don't remember this, but apparently they pulled me out screaming and I was squeezing this panic button over and over again.

Did they ever find out what caused it?

Yeah, it's a condition called antiphospholipid antibody. For some reason, your immune system starts attacking a protein that exists in your cells, and it causes the blood cells to clot more rapidly than they normally would. A healthy young guy that eats well has no business having a blood clot in his body. ¶ But the slurring of my speech didn't last very long and it never came back, but the numbness lasted for a while. I've been fine since then, but I was in intensive care for a week and out of work for a few weeks after that. The whole thing scared the *shit* out of me and made me re-examine my life and my priorities. ¶ After Kid Dynamite broke up, I finished my doctorate and had really thrown myself into my career. It was the second band in a row that got cut down in its prime, so I was thinking that maybe I should take the hint and not spend so much energy on bands. I kept writing music, but I hadn't played with anyone in about a year and a half. Instead, I was working 60 hours a week and I got married . . . I guess I was kind of living the straight life and getting really comfortable.

It's not that I have any problem with comfort or safety, but I think that once you've been in bands and been on tour, you see the world a little differently and you see how much wider your perspective can be. The transition to this straight life, working full time, focusing on my career and family . . . My hope was that I went into that with an enhanced perspective of what the world is like, but I think I had become sort of safe and sheltered. I was just working, coming home, and that's about it.

So, in a bizarre way, do you think having this stroke was a good thing?

I wouldn't wish this experience on *anybody*. Being 32 years old and having to come face to face with your own mortality is not something I would wish on anyone. But if it had to happen, I'm glad it happened to someone who could appreciate the meaning and message in it. I took a long, hard look at what had become important to me and what was filling up my time and it wasn't things that necessarily made me feel happy and fulfilled. My focus had also moved away from the relationships in my life, and it just reminded me of how lucky I am and how lucky I've been to have the experiences I've had. ¶ When you have to face the idea of your life ending, it makes you feel really fragile and vulnerable. My initial reaction to that was to sort of shut down emotionally. But then, when I started to wake up from this emotional numbness, I started to put *Paint It Black* together. That's when I realized you can't just wander through life numbly. In every moment of joy and pain, you should drink deeply of it. Just to be focused on career was not how I believe life should be lead. I love my career, but it's just one part of my life and I wanted my life to be much broader than that. Now, I'm going to sound like a hippie [laughs] but I sort of look at life like a rich tapestry and career is only one set of threads that run through that. There are a lot of other things out there and I had been neglecting them. Now, it's like everything is in much sharper focus. Everything seems more beautiful to me now—even the painful things.

I get a sense with your full-length, CVA, that *Paint It Black* comes off a bit more intense and aggressive than your past projects. Did this whole experience influence that sound?

Yeah, I would say so. It just seems that going through life now everything seems

more clear and sharp and intense to me, so I think the music had to become more intense, too. Life certainly hasn't been easy since then, and I'm not trying to get all emo and say "woe is me," but there have been a series of really intense goings-on in my life. I continue to have to monitor my health pretty closely and get my blood checked every couple of weeks. About a year after I had the stroke my wife and I separated and we're getting a divorce now. To experience that kind of loss and then a year later lose a relationship that I've had for nine years . . . in a way I was able to deal with it a lot better because of the stroke. Even though I experience the pain of loss really intensely, if you ask me, I prefer it. Oblivion is a whole lot scarier than that pain.

Well if you just came away from a near-death experience, what else could be worse?

I guess I appreciate being able to feel that loss so intensely because I have always had a lot of emotional walls around me. I think one of the things that went wrong in my marriage was that there were parts of me that were emotionally blocked off. She sensed that she didn't have access to parts of me and that drove a wedge between us. I think the stroke really helped me break through that and I guess the final straw was the disillusion of my marriage. To feel everything *that* intensely—one minute being so furious and frustrated and the next moment curled up in a corner sobbing—I'd never been through that before. There were *months* of this insane intensity. I can't say I wouldn't change a thing—I mean, there are some things I would have done differently—but I don't wish this hadn't happened to me. I guess now I get to have this musical vehicle to express myself that cuts straight through to the rawness of my experiences, with everything laid out there.

Obviously this really comes off in Paint It Black's sound.

Yeah, it's weird. I've gone through this musical progression that is almost diametrically opposed to what most of my peers in music have gone through. People tend to get mellower and more melodic the older they get. But for me, each band has been progressively *more* abrasive and I think Paint It Black kind of takes the cake. Given my background, there is no way that some melody doesn't creep through here and there. Originally when I imagined this band, I thought it would be even more thrash influenced, but I think some of that stuff is fairly limited in its capacity to really express a full range of human emotions since it's blasting at full speed the whole time. Melodies were creeping in all over the place even if they were subtle, so even though the music is really harsh, it still has a sense of melody. I still approach everything from a songwriting perspective, so the song craft is the first priority. It's a direct, unfiltered expression of my emotional experience. Even though it's really political, it's not these abstract songs about other people's oppression and experiences. They are directly filtered through how these experiences impact *me*. They aren't what I like to call "thesaurus punk."

Do you think people will be more receptive to a more honest, direct approach?

It's the only way I can do it. I want to hit people in the chest with this band. I want to open myself up wide and share some of that intensity—not so that people will agree with me or believe what I believe ideologically, but so that people can feel something genuine and raw and *powerful*. If I talk about something that is uncomfortable, I want to disturb people and make them uncomfortable too. If I talk about something that is optimistic and hopeful, then that's how I'm feeling when I write it and how I want them to experience it. I want to inspire people, inspire the people in my band, and even inspire myself. The only way to do that is to tap directly into the vein, so to speak.

Would you agree that the majority of music has been sort of emotionless the past few years?

I feel like people want party music. They want music to be an anesthetic. For me it can't be that. I've spent enough of my life anesthetized, and now I guess I feel like I've had this opportunity to experience this harsh—but kind of new—awakening the last two years of my life. As most people my age shift their focus to other things like paying the mortgage and manicuring the lawn and things like that, I think there is a numbing that comes along with that. I guess when people start to have kids you can't afford to necessarily lead the same level of idealism because other people are relying on you to survive, but also I think some people don't want to truly see some of the horrors that are around us. I think it's really hard to raise children and imagine a future for them when you are aware of all the atrocities going on both at home and abroad. It's hard not to feel that all the time and protect yourself from it when you're trying to imagine a future for your children. I definitely want to have children, though it's further off now than I thought it would be because I'm single again. I don't necessarily blame people for becoming anesthetized. I think as you get older it takes a lot more effort to stay plugged in. You get home from work, you're exhausted, and you turn on the TV—the number one anesthesia prescribed to human beings—and it goes downhill from there.

So, is the goal of Paint It Black to try and break people out of that slumber?

Yeah, it's to provoke and to share. I don't have any grandiose visions for punk rock saving the world, or even being part of an enormous cultural movement of resistance, but music certainly impacts humans individually and that's enough for me. That's all we really have. ☺

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About thirty seconds into "I Don't Do Dirty Work, Sucka!," track one on Angie Reed's debut, you know you're in good (and well-manicured) hands. The boss has just dictated a list of über-menial tasks, the booty bass kicks in, and Barbara Brockhaus, Reed's secretary alter ego, practically yawns lines like "this job is a jab in the ass." *Barbara Brockhaus presents music for the laZy and not the bureaucraZy* navigates through her caricature's stifling world of work and nightclubs and her expansive-but-predictable fantasies where gigolos and harem-masters tantalize. Appropriately, Barbara's voice alternates between mask-like innocence and the twangy cynicism of an "ask someone who cares" coffee mug. And it works.

Born in the US and raised almost entirely in Italy, Reed transplanted to Berlin eight years ago. After playing bass with Stereo Total, Reed went solo as a musician, performer, and visual artist. But Angie Reed has no interest in performing as herself, instead letting her character Brockhaus do the talking. Live, the Brockhaus show combines slide-projected drawings, techno, hip-hop, garage rock, rhymes, and, of course, Barbara/Angie herself, decked out in heels, blouses, pencil skirts, and red lipstick.

The show, which she hopes to bring to the States, has been well-received save a few small-town flops where the audience either didn't get it—"you could hear a pin drop" she says—or were actually pissed off. Reed prefers the latter. When she opened for the lefty German punks Die Goldenen Zitronen, "being American? A big boo for that," she says. "Speaking in English? More boos. And how I looked—they didn't like the image I portrayed as a woman." The response left her unfazed—"that was so much fun because that's the moment when you can let out all your aggression, like a machine gun." Ultimately, she just wants people to "laugh and have a good time" with the coy and saucy send-up that is Barbara Brockhaus.

After an embarrassingly difficult time dialing Germany, I talked to Angie from her Berlin apartment where she'd spent the whole day animating with unfamiliar software and was ready to kick back with a glass of Schnapps.

Interview by **Katje Richstaater**



Where did the Barbara Brockhaus, bored secretary persona come from?

It just kind of happened. I have all these drawings and I was making these movies with a slide projector, but people didn't understand what it was with just the drawings. It was very narrative, very funny, and it would always be more entertaining when I would say something about the particular situation. I wanted to mix that with music, so I came up with this idea from this secretary drawing, one of my favorites, who became the character. The first copy that I wrote didn't make any sense at all. Then after the third time things started rhyming, and I was like "Shit, this is so cheesy," so I worked on that, and the rhyming secretary character came out. Then I did the music about four months later. I'd purchased a drum machine and made all the beats and then went over to a friend's house and recorded it. The lyrics had been swimming around in shuffles of paper around my apartment, which is a complete mess. I didn't start off with a concept—"I'm gonna do a secretary show, it's gonna rhyme and it's gonna be this, and it's gonna be that"—I just did it.

As the character evolves, do you see the act as pure entertainment, or is there a social message?

There is a social message, but not *just* a social message. I think that it's a pretty ridiculous character in some ways, but there are many aspects that have to do with the working world, and a working woman's world. But I don't come from a total feminist point of view—it's more an individual point of view. I'm not attacking anything. It's this bored secretary who has a lot of dilemmas with her situ-

ation, but she escapes it with her cheesy sense of humor.

That's what's so smart about it, I think—you're using the sexual stereotypes of her playing dumb and being bored, but all day she doesn't work and has fantasies and gets paid for it.

She sells herself as dumb, but that's a way to get by. Not that it's *the* way, but it's *a* way for her. It's fun—it's not trying to teach anybody anything. That's something that bothers me about performances—they're often from this snobby point of view.

Preachy?

Yeah and I don't like it when people try to teach me things like that—I'm using this as a way of presenting kind of a shit situation that isn't really so bad, and making light of it.

Barbara is full of contrasts, like the contrast between her workday and nightlife, and the way she perceives herself versus the way others perceive her. How fun is it to create her?

Aw, yeah—that's the best thing that's happened so far! Before this I was playing bass with Stereo Total and it was my job to just function more as an arm. So with this show, it's been so much fun to just *be* Barbara for that hour or hour and a half—to be obnoxious and whatnot.

She's got a lot of attitude.

Yeah, yeah, sure. But it's not the only type of character I'd like to do. I'm collecting other ideas for characters—caricatures. I'd like to mix things up and use stereotypes and clichés to break them. There's a lot of sexuality, a lot of eros, in the Brockhaus show, and I'd like to continue using that but also bring other subjects.

The men in Barbara's world are very comical: The boss, the gigolo, the psychic dick. Are they only played for laughs, or are you messing with those roles, too?

Well, there's a lot of beef there because they all pose a different spectrum of male prowess. They act on instinct, like hunters. But a lot of the drawings are very effeminate—for some reason, a lot of my drawings of women are pretty masculine and the ones of men are very feminine. I ask myself why, and I think I'm just mixing the two, which is what's happening now. Women are more aggressive and the men have to find their new identity and roles, coping with it and seeing it as a step back, and being passive.

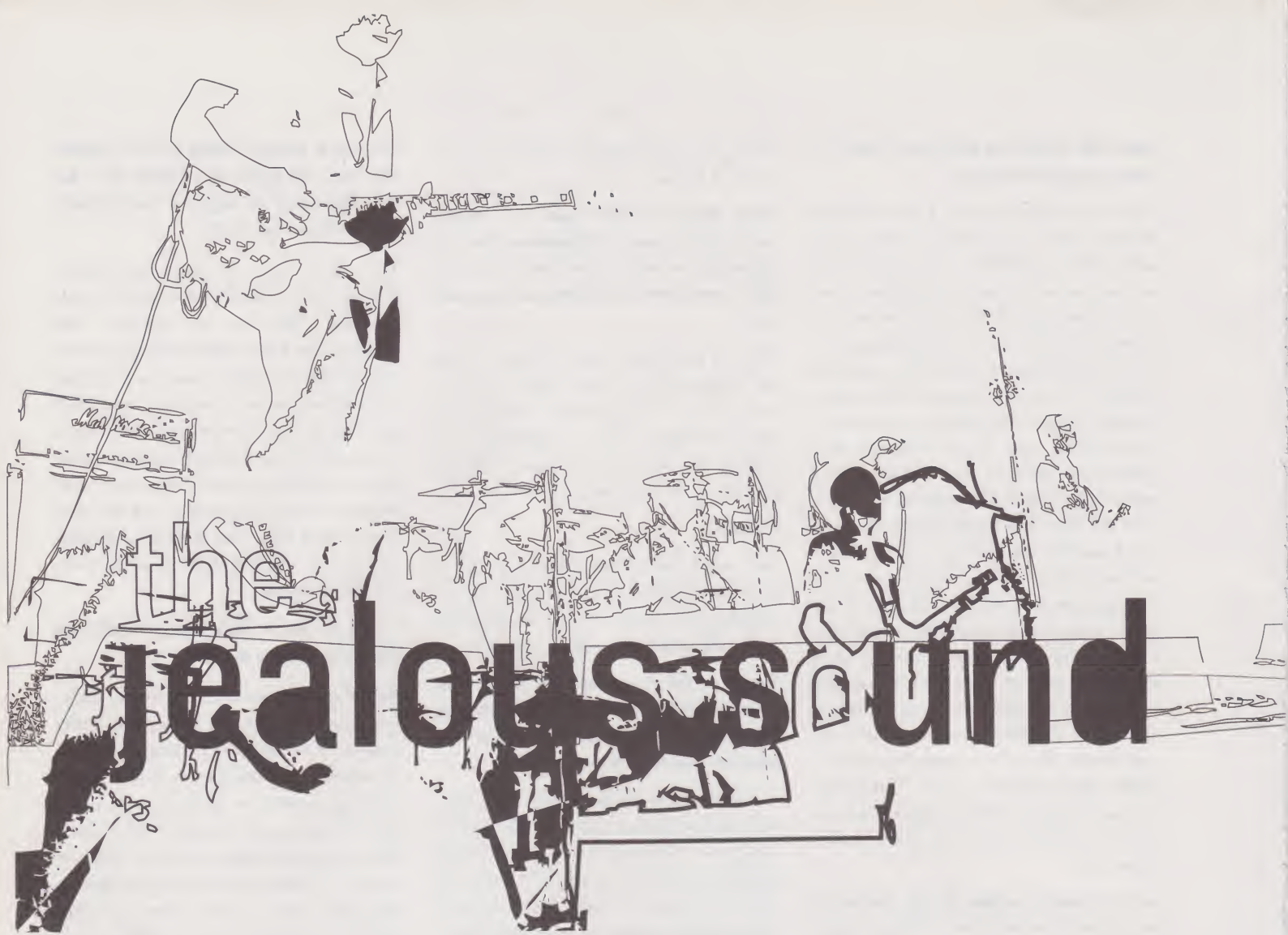
I think the whole office culture breeds that separation between the sexes.

Well, I've never worked in an office, really. I did quickly, but not enough to suffer from it. It comes from reading *Cosmopolitan* for career moves and sex tips, how to channel your ambitions, and how important that is for your self-esteem. They're always the same every month, just put in different words. It's always about how to be liked by men, how to be attractive, how to do this, and how to do that. I don't really have anything against it, because that's the way things are. It's just entertaining to take that and put it in a funny point of view with a protagonist who's supposedly living.

So is your commentary on work culture, just American work culture?

I'd say it's more global. The *humor* is more American, but the world is becoming more and more Americanized. There's not much difference anymore. ☺

IT'S FUN—IT'S NOT TRYING TO TEACH ANYBODY ANYTHING. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT BOTHERS ME ABOUT PERFORMANCES—THEY'RE OFTEN FROM THIS SNOBBY POINT OF VIEW.



Blair Shehan lives in Los Angeles. Echo Park to be exact, which is the sort of place where the streets are narrow and the lawns are made of concrete. Sunset Boulevard runs straight through there, but it's hardly the version you see on the postcards and star maps one can find about 10 miles west. The fabled street runs through here as if it were being chased by a car full of thugs, dashing away from the easy life of Hollywood's kinder and gentler climes.

In a way, this is perfect. You see, Shehan isn't much of an LA guy. He spent most of his life in Northern California where he bounced from one parking lot town to another, eventually winding up at the University of Davis in his early 20s. It was here that he would find his true calling: not in the classrooms or dusty books of Davis, but in a big, smart rock band

called Knapsack. The name meant nothing—Shehan once told an interviewer that, in fact, that's why he chose it—but for a select few, it went on to mean plenty.

Alongside seminal bands like Christie Front Drive, Boy's Life, and Mineral, Shehan found himself writing hard songs for soft boys, and since he spent nearly eight years writing albums with titles like *Day Three Of My New Life* or *This Conversation Is Ending Starting Right Now*, you probably don't need to plumb a history book to find his place. These were epic and heartfelt pop tunes: big on the hooks, heavy on the sentiment, and ringing true in basements instead of the Billboard charts. Which, for years, is exactly where they stayed. Knapsack never became a band that a lot of people liked, they became a band that a small group of people absolutely *loved*. That guy in

band was handed over to their parent company, Jive Records, thus beginning another major label war story that Shehan will surely spend the next few years telling.

Which is too bad considering that the album he and his bandmates more or less recorded on their own dime should do all the talking for them. Titled *Kill Them With Kindness* (finally at home on the independent Better Looking Records), it's overflowing with the anthemic hooks that could be found in Knapsack's better moments, but countered by some newly-torn journal pages that represent a lyricist coming into his own. It's the sort of debut album that has a lifetime of near misses and rugged regrets poured into every note. Which is to say that Shehan is back, and with some of the strangest timing imaginable.

In a way, this is also perfect. The idea of Shehan coming around with an album of big, rich pop-punk songs about adulthood in a time when acting like an adult isn't exactly the way one gets big or rich while playing pop-punk songs is a confusing one at best.

"Things are so strange now," Shehan says, tucking into a three-dollar quesadilla plate as we begin our interview at a dirt-cheap taqueria on the wrong end of the star track. "All of these bands and all of these kids now . . . it's a different world. I mean, what do you think of all of the stuff that's going on right now? Don't you think it's crazy?"

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

When people sort of whispered about what was going on with the band, dating back to when you first signed to Mojo, I think it was misunderstood that you were really trying to go for it with the Jealous Sound.

Like I was trying to achieve my big dreams of rock stardom? [laughs]

Well, I guess that's one way of putting it.

I can assure you that it was never like that. It was never like, "Hey guys, we're getting interest from a major, let's really go all out!" The A&R guy at Mojo that signed us was this guy named Eric Garvey, and he is very passionate about music. He was the same guy that almost signed the Get Up Kids and he was always a big fan of Knapsack. Eric takes music very seriously. He's very passionate about it and when he approached us, he did so as a friend. I felt

very comfortable with it. It wasn't anything that felt that scary to me. But then, on his end, the business fell apart and Eric lost his job, which lead to us getting shuffled over to Jive Records. As far as I'm concerned, though, we were never on that label. I never even went to the offices there.

Really? I think that's the only part of this story I haven't heard yet.

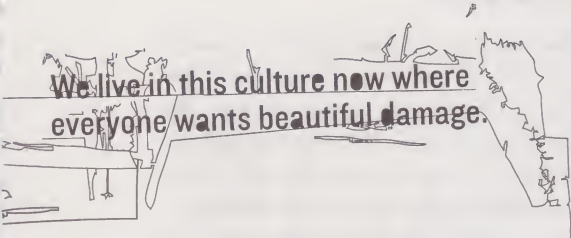
Oh yeah. I don't even know where their offices are. The most I interacted with them was going out to dinner with some people from the label. I think I had dinner with our A&R guy twice. We maybe called or e-mailed him for a couple things, but other than that there was no interaction whatsoever. When we would invite them out to the shows, they would never come. It was just ridiculous.

Surely, then, you knew this wasn't going to work out.

Of course I did. The whole thing was just a recipe for disaster. If we would have stuck with Jive, they would have held on to us indefinitely. They would have kept asking us for more and more demos. I think the whole time Jive was just wondering if they wanted to play the card with us. But eventually we were like, "Look, you *have* to make a decision." We had no interest in them—we didn't even want to be there. These weren't the people I had a relationship with and if I don't know you, really, what can I do with you? Especially when you don't know what to do with *me*.

Is it kind of upsetting that people only seem to want to talk to you about your failed record deal?

Not really. It's just that the story has been told a million times now, and it's not that interesting to me anymore. When you get involved with a major label, often times, things don't work out. It happens. But there are sort of some weird circumstances to our story, because we never actually put out a record on a major. It's like it never even happened. ¶ In some ways Jive was actually helpful. They ended up giving us some money and some resources and we didn't have to give them anything in return. Basically all they took from us was our time. The way we were looking at it was



We live in this culture now where everyone wants beautiful damage.

the Ataris with the real expensive haircut once said that Knapsack gave him a reason to write music. Like all Knapsack fans, he meant it, too.

But then in the winter of 2000, Shehan split from the group and started a new band called the Jealous Sound (nicking the name—and, truth be told, a bit of their trademark sound—from a dormant Knapsack song). Moving to LA two years earlier, the singer quickly found himself playing with ex-Sunday's Best guitarist Pedro Benito, local scene vet John McGinnis and, after a few predecessors, former Shudder To Think timepiece Adam Wade. He also found himself in the offices of Mojo records, a major label you either hold in contempt for unleashing Reel Big Fish on this earth or remember for nearly signing the Get Up Kids. Either way, within weeks of nabbing the Jealous Sound the label went bankrupt and the

that, at the end of the day, it was just going to be a blob of ink on our record. As long as no one interfered with how we made the record, who cares? There is more to this band than just that. That's just business, and to me that's not that interesting. It has nothing to do with the actual creation of the art.

Do you think people look to you for failure?

Like the tragic loser or something like that? [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] Yeah, I suppose they do.

Why do you think that is?

I don't know. I guess people always want a tragedy. You can romanticize failure all you want, but I really don't look at myself that way. I don't want my life to be tragic. I want my life to be amazing! [*laughs*] I think you end up creating a caricature of yourself if you focus on only one emotion, whether it's failure or tragedy or happiness. I don't see myself as a loveable loser or see any sort of beauty in the tragedy of my songs. I could maybe see why other people do, but I don't see myself as a failure in any way, shape, or form.

Well, it would be terrible if you did. That's really no way to go about making a living.

[*Laughs*] No, it's really not.

How old are you?

I'm 30.

Now, I don't mean this in a bad way, but these days it's becoming increasingly rare to see someone that old in this sort of scene. At that age, people begin to look at you like you're a lifer.

Yeah, I guess that's true. But it's not like I think about that. This has always been what I do and I've done it for years. Even if it can be overwhelming at times, there's still something really great about it. I started doing this when I was 22—I've been at it for eight years now and eight years can go by like *that*, man. In that time, this is the reality that I've created for myself. It's where I am and I'm comfortable with where that is. Plus, to me, 30 isn't that old. There are a lot of older people out there who are still making great music. I mean, jeez, to be washed up when you're only 30? That would be pretty crazy.

But, at some point, I'm sure it gets daunting.

You just have to go for broke. When I started the Jealous Sound it didn't seem weird at all. It seemed totally logical. I've spent a *long* time doing this—it's sort of all I know. I do have an education and I'm sure there's another life waiting for me at some point. I'm *not* going to be playing at the Holiday Inn when I'm 50. But when you're serious about something, you really have to go for it. You have to let yourself be *consumed* by it.

Is that happening for you now?

Absolutely. I think I'm more honest and I'm more in touch with it now than I've ever been. Occasionally you'll find someone out there with an old soul—there will be a group of 20-year-old kids that are amazing and that do have that. But that's not usually the case. Generally, when you're that young, your brain is not fully formed yet. You're sort of goofy. [*laughs*] I know I was! I remember walking around thinking, "What am I doing with my life?" I think that things are better than they've ever been for us as a band.

I know that these things aren't easily reduced, but after nearly a decade of doing this, what do you think you have to show for it?

For me, if you're happy with what you do and you're successful in your own way, that's it. What will always be great about this, I think, is that the bands that I've been in have always created something out of nothing. To me that's an amazing thing. As a band, when you give birth to a record, it literally comes out of nowhere. The fact that something comes out of thin air and can influence others—or even that you can form this bond between four guys and find a way to get along with it—to me that's still a very amazing thing.

Is there ever a sick and sad voice in your head—and I suppose this comes with age—that kind of forces you to think that those simple things aren't enough?

That has everything to do with perception. That really just comes down to how much happier you feel when you have a lot of money or a lot of support, as opposed to when you don't. Obviously you're more comfortable and more secure, but some-

times being wealthy can make you just as unhappy as being poor can. It really depends on how you gauge success—is it through money or popularity? Is that how you determine it? I don't know. Those are sort of weird barometers for me. As long as there are people that care, nothing can change what it is you've done. What I've done has never been ignored, and the bands I've been in have never gone unnoticed. Obviously that's all you can want as an artist. You just want to be recognized for your art.

Do you ever wonder how you'll be remembered when you finally walk away from this?

Not really.

Not even a little?

I just hope that these songs spoke to people and that they had heart. So few bands have heart. They're just going through the motions and, yeah, they're really popular right now, but in the end was it *real*? I think I've always spoken honestly about things. I guess I would like to be remembered for that. Obviously we're working within the confines of rock'n'roll here, and there are things within those confines that do not exist as pure art. There are a lot of things that come with being in a rock band—you know, your rider and your backstage scenes and your tour bus and the press and the media—and that stuff is not pure to the art. At one time I felt like the core root was pure, but we're still talking about rock bands here. There are a lot of motivations for being in a rock band other than the music. You do come to a point where you ask, "Why am I doing this? Why am I in a rock band? Why do I write rock music? Am I out to create meaningful art or am I out for something else?" I see a lot of that in the stuff that's going on right now. I'm sure you see it all the time.

I do. It's now become a very acceptable part of this music. But there was a time not that long ago where all of that show business kind of stuff could only be found elsewhere.

Do you think that's distasteful?

What, that there are punk bands that are interested in that?

Yeah, I guess—or just rock'n'roll in gener-

al. Obviously there is this whole show business aspect to what I do, and it's a strange beast. Let's just put it that way. Like, when you're actually interviewing someone: most of the time, they're being dishonest with you. They have rehearsed answers and they want to present themselves to you and they want you to write whatever it is they've just presented. I don't know about that stuff. You do wonder.

It's true. I feel like this music used to be about genuine thought and emotion and hurt, and now it's just a hot topic among these MTV-soaked kids in the middle of America. It's not about real pain anymore. It's about the idea of manufacturing pain. That very idea has really put me in a weird place.

I guess all of that goes back to a bunch of middle class white kids feeling some angst—and, really, who fucking cares about that? Sorry. Your pain is not special Mr. Rock guy. You just happen to have a voice and you're really pretty. We live in this culture now where everyone wants beautiful damage. It's like looking at a cute little puppy that's hurt, and saying, "Oh, you poor baby." Meanwhile there's this mangy mutt in the corner that has got a bad leg and no one cares! [laughs]

How do you think these younger bands see you?

Some people have told me they like what I've done, and that's nice. But it's definitely different. Contemporaries for me when I was starting out were bands like the Promise Ring or Christie Front Drive. With those bands there wasn't such an emphasis on commerce. It was a lot less self-aware at that point. I think it was a little bit more from the heart. Now it's sort of ridiculous. I have to laugh at things now. It's just fucking insane to see people out there who are obviously older and they're playing this music. It's like when you're watching *Beverly Hills 90210* and you look at the actors and you think, "Wait a minute, that dude is 32 and I'm supposed to believe he's 19!" [laughs] I'm not going to be able to relate to some 19 year-old-kid anymore. I should have a more adult perspective on these things. It would be ridiculous if I didn't.

If someone looked at you as a survivor, would you . . .



There are a lot of motivations for being in a rock band other than the music. You do come to a point where you ask, "Why am I doing this? Why am I in a rock band? Why do I write rock music? Am I out to create meaningful art or am I out for something else?" I see a lot of that in the stuff that's going on right now.

Man, you are *really* going down this road, aren't you? I feel like you're making me out to be this weathered old man. [laughs]

Oh no, not at all. It's just that 10 years is a long time to have done something like this.

No, it is.

Then why would it bum you out if I were to say that?

It doesn't really. But no one wants to be perceived as a *dinosaur*. If you love what you do, then you're going to keep doing it. For me, that's all it is. Rock is a youth-orientated thing, sure, and at some point you have to move on to something different. I've been putting out records at a relatively consistent rate for eight years now and when you do that, you really don't pay that much attention to these things. If you step back at times and think, "We should have been more successful" or "Look at this other band, they're so successful and we're not," then you're surviving a hardship that you've created. You're only going to be bitter if you stand around and look at some young upstart band and wonder why they're so popular. I haven't worried about that. I just wrote some music and had some good times. I guess that I just don't feel like a survivor. Really, what have I survived?

To me, it's not about what you survived, it's about what you have to share. These inter-

views that I do in *Punk Planet*, I hope, are about more than whether or not a band was cool or whether or not they "sold out" or whether or not they should have moved on. Forget about all of that. What I want to know is whether or not something was learned.

I hope there was. Whatever I've done I hope that it has actually been seen as growth in some way and that it was meaningful. That's it, really: I hope I'm perceived as someone who has grown. People get so wrapped up with what's cool and with being cool. I always try to picture these "cool" people 20 years from now, because if they lack character or they lack commitment, then they're just going to be a joke. They may be cool right now, but all of it's going to come out eventually. History will tell you what's what. I just want to be remembered for something that was legitimate.

Do you feel like you're still working towards that?

I do. Sometimes I feel like I just started. Some people may see the Jealous Sound as the end of the road or as a new chapter, but for me it's like, "Okay, we're doing this now and this is great at *this* moment." I can't worry about what I'm going to be doing later. I hope that whatever I've done can be seen as growth in one way or another. I probably don't want to be in a rock band when I'm 40 because that doesn't sound like the life for me. But at this point it's still a good life. ©

On a dark and stormy night, a crass pompadoured trickster commands the stage of Chicago's Abbey Pub. He's blowing snot on the fans in the front row, ripping out copious amounts of his own pubic hair, and cursing Jesus H Christ and the womb of the harlot who bore him.

While engaging in these depraved acts of disorderly conduct (albeit with a sly wink and a wide grin), vocalist "Colonel" JD Wilkes and his band The Legendary Shack Shakers ripped through some of the most *genuine* rock'n'roll tunes I've heard in years. Joe Buck slashed away at his guitar strings, Pauly Simonz dented the heads of his drums, Mark Robertson attempted to pull the strings of his upright bass off their plank, while JD howled bloody murder into the mic in an attempt to lead the collective souls of the congregation somewhere beyond the puny, man-made brick and mortar of the venue. Whether the 31-year-old former art student's intended destination was the soothing, gooey goodness of The Divine's bosom, or some scorching lake of fire in Hades wasn't clear. His moral compass was on the fritz and only pointed in the direction of the murky swamps located in the recesses of his own boogie-beaten brain.

After the show, the sweat-drenched Wilkes let me inside that brain to learn about the surprising origins of this rock'n'roll frontman.

Interview by **Ari M Joffe**

There's a lot of comedy and acting in your live show. Have you ever studied theatre or comedy?

No. Right before I went to college, I went to a kind of charismatic Christian school where they talked in tongues, jumped pews, had foot washings, and even had exorcisms. It was nondenominational, but it could be compared to the Assembly Of God or Pentecostal Church. There was a lot of charismatic acting going on there. I wasn't consciously studying the way these people

behaved, but in retrospect it really influenced me—I thought it was fascinating. Most of my classmates were like, "We gotta get out of here! This place is stifling!" But I was having the time of my life! [laughs] It was such a surreal atmosphere. I never really participated; I never spoke in tongues. I was just an observer—*completely* fascinated. I played along as much as I could—did the altar call, got baptized and all that—that stuff wasn't a joke to me, I was very sincere about it, but the whole experience was a wonderful education on how to dwell *completely* in the moment and let it flow through you. I look back on it now, and I don't know what the *hell* was going on there. I think the parish was made up of all these frustrated-rural-farmer types, and talkin' in tongues was their form of scat or be-bop.

Did that give you any kind of a Jerry Lee Lewis complex?

I did struggle with that, 'cause I wanted to be a Christian. But of course, you can't be Christ-like and be in a rock'n'roll band. What I had to determine for myself was that rock'n'roll was neither the Devil's music *nor* God's music, but man's music. Man, being the balance of animal and angel, is stuck somewhere in the middle, and rock'n'roll is his therapy. It's what he's gotta do to let it all out—it's what he does to exorcise his demons. That's what it is for me. That's all I'm doin' up there. I'm not claiming to be an "artiste," or some 300 pound black guy playing my harmonica on the front porch—I'm not trying to be something I'm not. It's just my therapy, that's all. It's the way I choose to experience the music I love—Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, those Chess sessions—I channel it. ¶ Music strikes me so much that I can't just be an audiophile with a record player and my little records. I have

to totally be *inundated* by it, absorb it, devour it, and spit it back out in order to fully appreciate it. The first time I heard "Mean Red Spider" by Muddy Waters I was a 15-year-old kid in the back seat of my father's car. It came on the radio, and I just started having these convulsions! I was like, "What the fuck is this music! I don't know what's going on with me!" I don't know too many people who experience music that intensely anywhere! But I found them, and they're in my band now. ¶ These guys with me now, we all get collectively aggravated when we see that our music's dying; we see people promoting it for the wrong reasons. They're making it all about fashion and trend.

You grew up in Kentucky. Did you hear a lot of Appalachian music growing up?

Yeah, at bluegrass festivals and things like that. I also lived in Louisiana for six years, and I absorbed a lot of the Zydeco stuff that was going on down there. There'd be blues on the public radio station and my dad had a blues-record collection that I inherited. So that was the stuff I heard first. When we moved back to Kentucky, I was a little older, and I was able to study Kentucky bluegrass and country a lot more. But I was always more into blues: Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Lightnin' Hopkins, Slim Harpo, Magic Sam, and those guys—actually, all that's Chicago music!

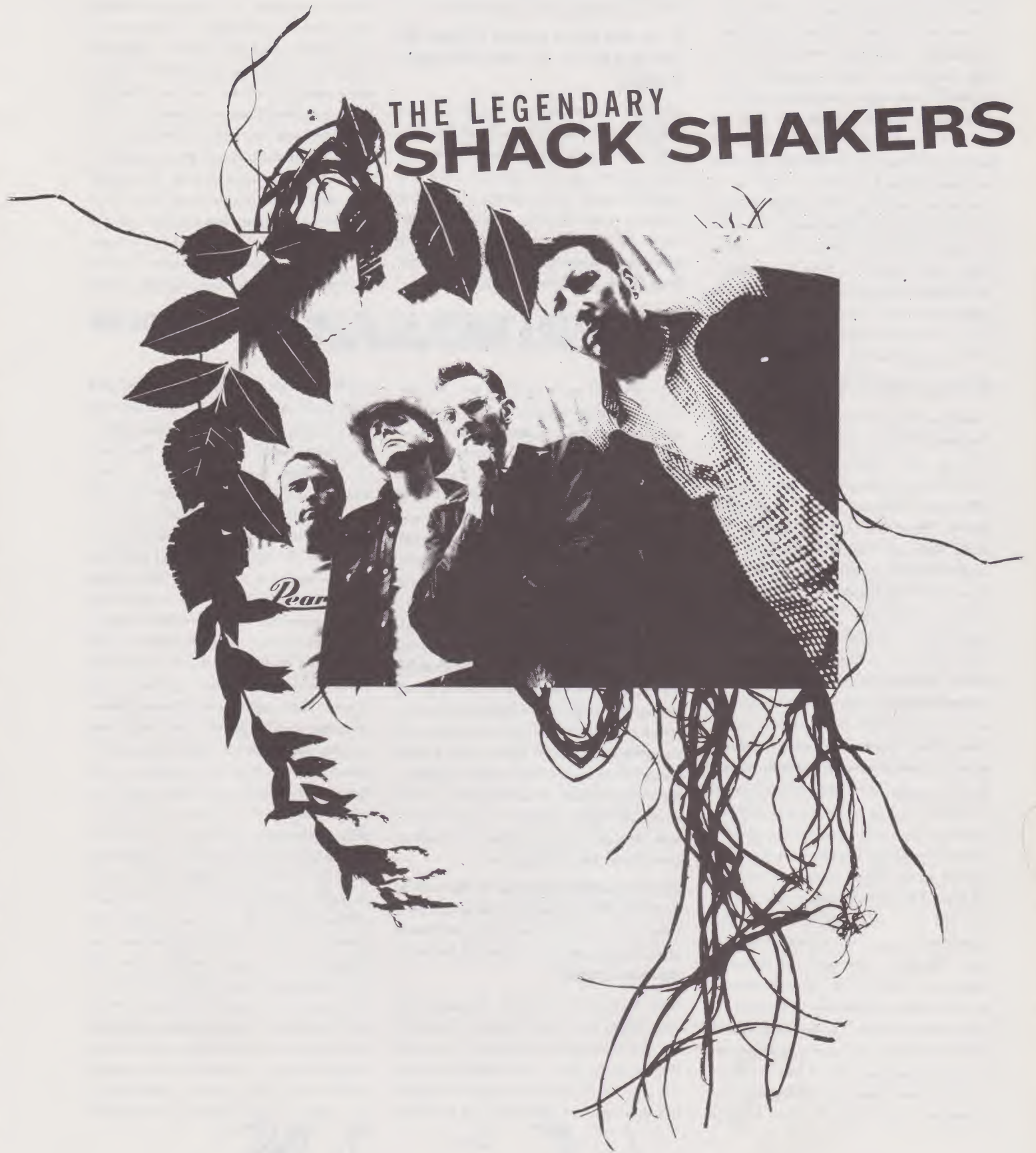
It seems like radio stations and record companies, for whatever reasons, present blues as being "black music," while bluegrass and country were presented as "white music." But it all seems to come from a similar place and have similar themes.

It's all passionate three-cord music with soul and fire. Soul is soul. If there's a white guy

I'M NOT CLAIMING TO BE AN "ARTISTE," OR SOME 300 POUND BLACK GUY PLAYING MY HARMONICA ON THE FRONT PORCH—I'M NOT TRYING TO BE SOMETHING I'M NOT. IT'S JUST MY THERAPY, THAT'S ALL.



THE LEGENDARY **SHACK SHAKERS**



or a black guy, they *both* go through pain. *Everybody* goes through pain; everybody's got something they've gotta work out. Music, in its most primal form, is therapy for the people that play it and hear it and feel it on the most visceral level. That's why we don't really get off on the singer-songwriter stuff—it's all smartsy, pseudo-intellectual stuff, ya know. That stuff's good for people that don't have any problems. But I think you can sweat your balls off and get a lot of stuff out of your system listening to The Shack Shakers or Muddy Waters or other bands that try to tap into that primal thing. It's a joyous thing, too—"laughin' to keep from cryin,'" like Langston Hughes said. That what we're going for. We've sorta got a Southern Gothic, rock'n'roll thing going on, and we're mixing it in with a lot of blues.

What do you mean by "Southern Gothic"?

"Southern Gothic" can be anything from Flannery O'Connor to Jerry Lee Lewis. It's anything that depicts the reality of the South as this battleground of all the various influences. Whereas "gothic" is medieval fantasy, "Southern Gothic" is *reality*. The South has racial strife; a post-civil war emotional battle ground for what it means to be in the "new South;" the carpetbaggers and the scalawags; the church being replaced by television; and the old church being replaced by the big, fat, swollen, greedy televangelist church that's more obsessed with the size of their skating rinks than they are about the condition of the souls of their flock. A lot of these things helped to build the South and influenced a lot of its music. It all kind of grew out of the strife of trying to live in two different worlds—a black world and a white world; a modern world and a traditional world; an isolated world and an integrated world. ¶ All these different influences and factors, they still exist today and I think the best music comes out of there because of all of that. All these cross-cultural dynamics build up and have to be released through art: the works of Flannery O'Connor, "a Jesus-haunted South," as she put it; the life of Jerry Lee Lewis; the show that we put on. It's a grotesqueness of God and the Devil. It's all of these cross-cultural dynamics and pressures that are on your typical

Southerner—black or white—and the way that they deal with it, together or apart. It's a very dark thing, but it's beautiful too.

Do you think there's any kind of stigma still attached to the idea of a "white boy" playing the blues?

Oh, yeah. They'll call you a "minstrel act" or something like that. The way I deal with that is through humor and comedy. Obviously, I'm some skinny, 100 pound, white kid from Kentucky. I'm not foolin' *anybody*! But as long as you don't present yourself as some sort of bad-ass—like, "if you don't dig my music, ya got a hole in your soul," that whole Beale Street, Fat Tuesday, "funky" blues atti-

THEY'LL CALL YOU A "MINSTREL ACT" OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. THE WAY I DEAL WITH THAT IS THROUGH HUMOR AND COMEDY.

tude—then it's not a minstrel act. All that New Orleans gumbo music is a bunch of white guys trying to present themselves as something they're not. We're definitely not a minstrel act—we're making fun of ourselves as hillbillies, too. ¶ There was something called "the Piedmont sound" that came out of the Piedmont area of Virginia and North Carolina back in the '20s. It was a real cross-cultural phenomenon. You had lots of acts where the black guys were playin' country music and the white guys were singin' from a different part of their throat tryin' to sound "black." But none of it was done in a hateful way—there was a lot of collaboration going on between the people of different races and and it was done in a spirit of peace and understanding. ¶ *That's* when music is most successful—when it brings people together. But when it tries to be insulting or it tries to be an affectation, people can smell that a mile away. That's why the blues goes underground and stays underground.

What do you think happened to the "roll" in rock'n'roll? There are a lot of genres that have taken the "rock" part pretty far, like heavy metal, but they seemed to have left the "roll," the boogie, behind.

Well, I think it was Keith Richards who said, "Rock'n'roll isn't from the shoulders up, it's from the waist down." I saw the Rolling Stones live, and I think they keep the "roll" in it. There are people throughout time who are lightning rods for these

ancient tones that echo from creation. You can either channel it or you don't—it's not for everybody. ¶ I think postmodern detachment is to blame. It's not a very communal world we live in anymore. People don't know their neighbors; there's not a whole lot of soul in our urbanized lifestyle. Everything is becoming more industrial and less human. People aren't reminded of their blood, guts, and soul—the energy that animates us; the muck, dirt, and earth that we come out of. In your more agrarian areas and eras, people are more tied to the earth. They are more in touch with their humanity. There's something about the soul and grit of that

world that kept everyone more honest and communal and friendly. ¶ The church was still a factor in people's lives. Now, television has replaced the church as the opiate of the masses. Church used to be a place where people would go for fellowship and to coordinate their good works. It was a very humane thing. Now, Christianity is a joke—it's all this televangelist bullshit. They're trying to modernize Christianity and make it hip. You don't have the old hymns anymore, it's all "worship songs." It's all about a show of gaudy wealth. It used to be about the little ol' church in the wild-wood where people came together to sing hymns. That might be an idealized interpretation, but I think that was a better way of living than what it is today. Any institution—it could be the government, or the church, or schools—the larger and more conglomerate it becomes, the more debauched it gets at its core. It grows to a certain level, and it just starts to collapse on itself under its own weight. Then it goes through a period where you have to burn off the old growth, and wait for the new growth to come. ¶ I think right now we're living in an era that's swollen with self-importance and postmodern detachment. It's gonna have to get to the point where we boil it all down to its roots again and break it all down to its core. It doesn't have to be a huge blowout, it could be like a massive undermining that goes on, culturally. I don't know. [laughs] Maybe we can help. ©



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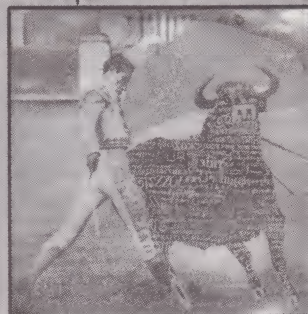
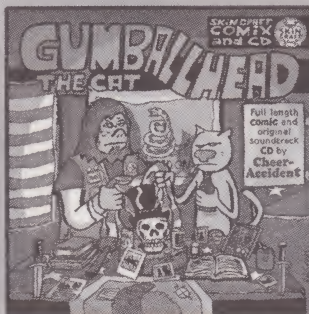


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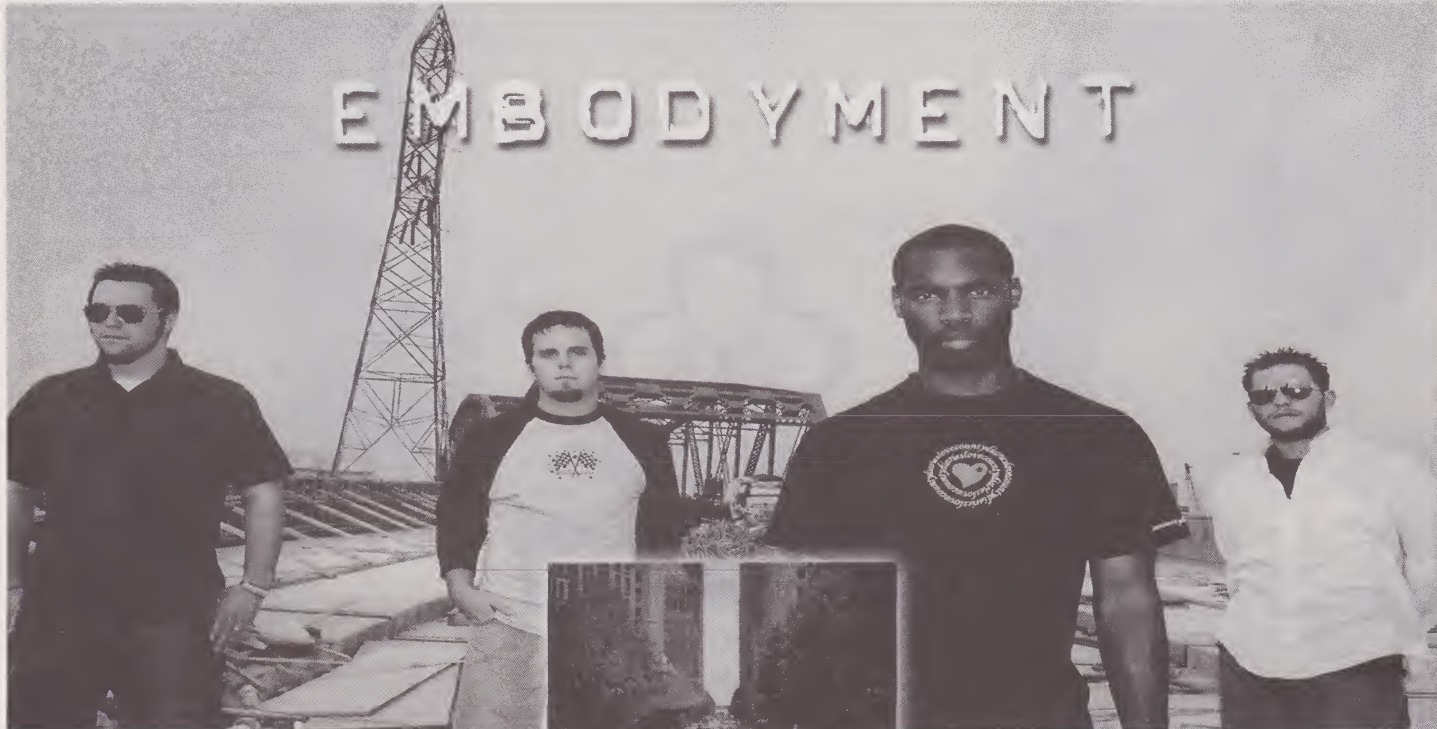
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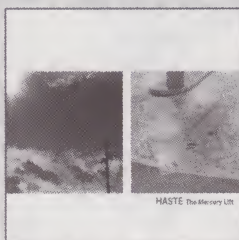
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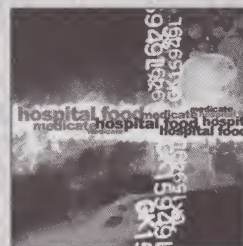
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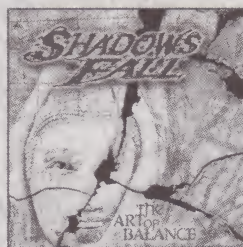
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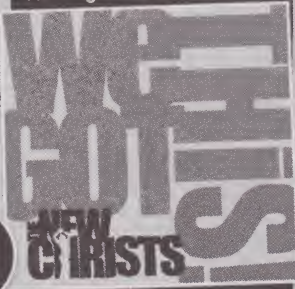
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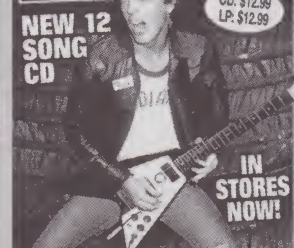
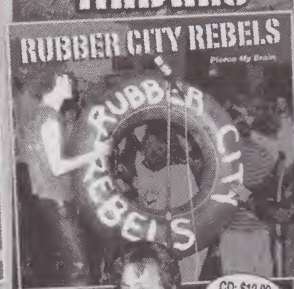
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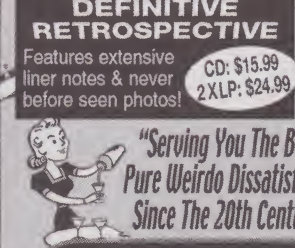
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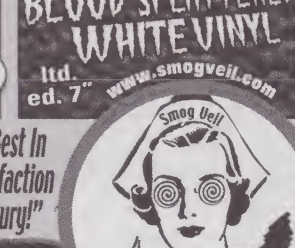
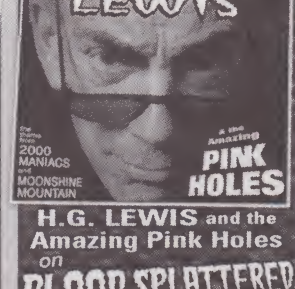
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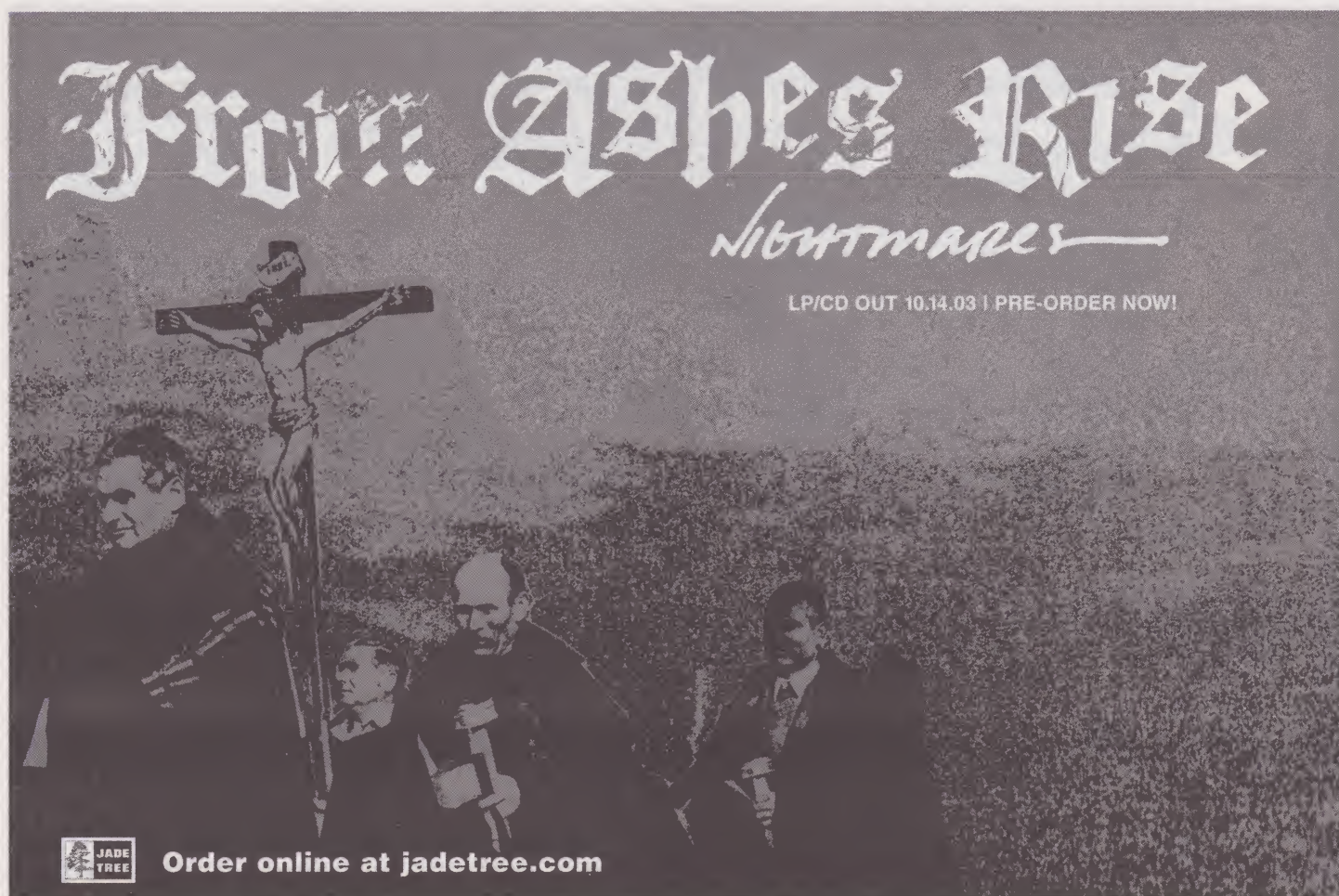
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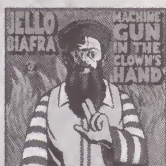
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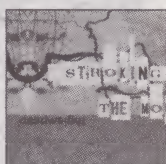
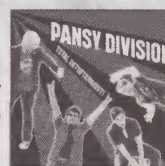
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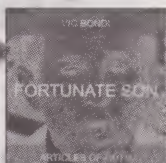
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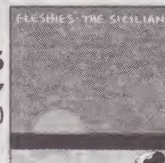
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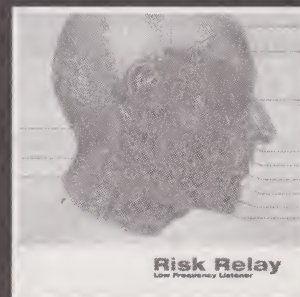
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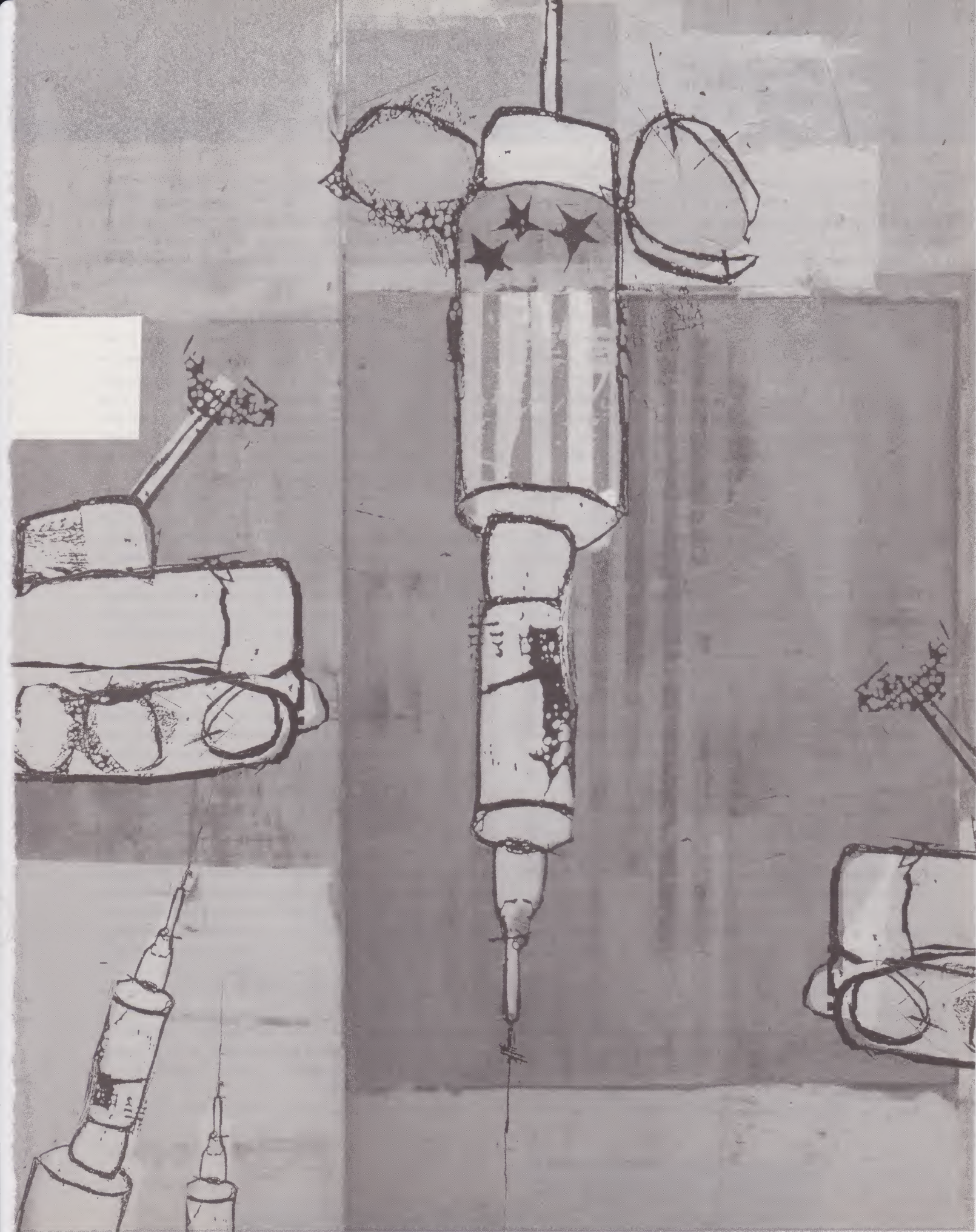
Heroin production in Afghanistan has increased by 1,800% since the fall of the Taliban. So why is the US looking the other way?


every Tuesday night from six to eight, there's a line in Duboce alley behind the Castro Safeway in San Francisco, California. The Safeway is a notorious pick up joint for gay and lesbian singles. In fact, on any given Friday or Saturday night, it's not uncommon to see primped men and women, dressed in designer slacks and tight-fitting shirts, moving from aisle to aisle inside the supermarket, eyeing each other, flirting, and exchanging cell phone numbers. But there is no one looking for a date in the alley out back. Instead, a small cluster of volunteers from the San Francisco Aids Foundation HIV Prevention Project are exchanging needles with intravenous drug users, many of whom are heroin addicts.

The folks who arrive to exchange their dirty needles for clean ones are a portrait of contemporary urban life. A hip young gay couple arrives, wearing sharp cuffed Levis, as fashion dictates, one with a yellow messenger bag, plaid scarf, chain wallet, and Nike sandals. A trio of young, white skate punks arrives, no older than 19. With blonde hair tucked under a blue baseball cap, one of the teenage girls fumbles through all the pockets in her oversized cargo pants and produces a handful of orange-tipped needles. Her friend, wearing a baggy sweat shirt, sits down on the curb, pulls out a screwdriver and begins to fiddle with his skateboard trucks while the others get clean rigs and new works.

by **George B Sanchez**

illustrations by **Nick Butcher**





A 30-something white male strolls the alley wearing black imitation Prada shoes, tight blue jeans, and a black button-up shirt—he's visibly nervous and patrols the alley twice before joining the line of addicts. He carries his dirty needles hidden in a Whole Foods bag. Behind him, a middle-aged black man stands restlessly in dusty work pants and a thick flannel jacket. They all wait to reach Alicia Rigby, the only paid staff person working the needle exchange tonight.

Rigby holds a brown clipboard where she takes note of the apparent ethnicity and gender of tonight's clients and records the amount of needles exchanged. Little more than an hour after the exchange began, the sheet on her clipboard reads a count of 110 clients so far. The folks in line deposit their needles in red bio-hazard bins on either side of Rigby and then move to the next station in line, where Tek Chog, a white Buddhist monk in a traditional maroon and yellow cassock, stands behind a grey cart.

Chog's cart is stacked with boxes of assorted needles—shorts, longs, micros, and 3CC needles. The difference between the shorts and longs is an eighth of an inch and a larger gauge. Micros hold half the volume—50 units. And the 3CC needles are for folks who inject into muscle tissue. Chog gives the clients the needles they request, sometimes chatting them up, sometimes not.

People then move down the line as they please, picking up condoms, clean water, cotton swabs, and plastic ties. At the end of the line is a short blond nurse, who the Department of Public Health requires to be on site. She answers questions and dispenses advice and medical opinions as needed. A middle-aged man stops before her, setting his scuffed leather brief case at his feet. He takes off his suit coat, rolls back a white sleeve, and reveals his pale, black-haired right arm that's enflamed and bright red from the middle of his forearm to above his elbow. The nurse gets to work inspecting his arm.

Rigby says she remembers clients talking about rumors of heroin coming out of Afghanistan about a year ago.

"What we were hearing was from people who were using the site, who were talking about it all the time," she recalls, brushing away strands of brown and purple hair from the lens of her red-framed glasses. "Like, 'here it comes,' 'It's coming,' 'Have you got any?' and asking us if we had heard anything.

"That's pretty much all we had to go on," Rigby continues. "What do we do? Do we start handing out more overdose prevention fliers, do we have overdose trainings—nobody knew what the effect was going to be or if it was going to get here."

Luckily, the heroin never made it to San Francisco, at least not enough to make a difference in the city's drug market. But the rumors were right: Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, opium cultivation and heroin production have risen at a staggering rate—1,800 percent from 2001 to 2002. After an epic drop in levels of opium farming, under a Taliban-enforced ban, Afghanistan has re-emerged as the leading producer of opium and heroin in the world.

Afghanistan's return to opium cultivation and heroin production was not without warning; at least three organizations made clear the danger and likelihood of this war-torn country's shift back towards wide-scale farming of the drug. But those warnings went unheeded, leaving the rise of opium cultivation and heroin production a deadly by-product of the United States-led war on terrorism.

"As soon as the Taliban was ousted"

"The opium started as soon as the Taliban was ousted in late 2001," explains Doctor Zaher Wahab, professor of education at Lewis and Clark University in Portland, Oregon. "The Taliban had actually almost eliminated [opium production]; the US Drug Enforcement Agency and even our own State Department said they [the Taliban] had reduced the opium production to a minimum. Now the country has the dubious distinction of being the top opium producing, heroin producing country in the world."

Doctor Wahab went to Afghanistan last year at the invitation of the country's Minister of Higher Education. The purpose of his trip was to help develop a strategic plan for the country's education system, which, like most other social services in Afghanistan, is nearly nonexistent. During his time in the country, he was asked to do a wide variety of tasks, from lending a critical eye to the country's school system to changing locks in government buildings for security purposes—a reflection of the country's lack of manpower to repair its infrastructure.

Wahab, who was born about 100 miles southwest of Kabul in Ghazni, witnessed the downward spiral of his homeland over decades of war. Traveling through the country during his recent trip, he says he couldn't help but observe the opium fields of rural Afghanistan ripe with white poppies. Their existence, professor continues, is not difficult to understand.

"The reasons for that [opium poppy cultivation] are—one, the central government does not have the capacity, the strength, or the legitimacy to control the country and the territory," explains Wahab, his voice quick with urgency. "Two, the warlords, the independent commanders and militias, have control of the country. Basically, they are interested in raising money so they can maintain large armies, buy weapons and ammunitions, and also continue the patronage and payment system. Three, the Americans, the coalition forces—there are 12,000 or so coalition force members—their main interest is to hunt the Taliban and Al Qaeda and other insurgent forces. They're not really interested at all in either controlling drug production, other kinds of crime, or doing development work."

In a country that has so little infrastructure, Afghanistan's return to opium cultivation is not surprising to the professor. Agrarian lifestyles have changed little in decades, says Wahab, so it was, in fact, almost inevitable.

"This is basically a country where 85 percent of the people

The American's "main interest is to hunt the Taliban and Al Qaeda and other insurgent forces. They're not really interested at all in either controlling drug production, other kinds of crime, or doing development work," says Dr. Zaher Wahab

depend on the land. It is their way of life and that's all they have because there's no industry, there's no civil service, there's very little commerce," remarks Wahab. "So you need to help people—give them some money, give them some technology, give them the seeds, the fertilizers, help them with irrigation, but also develop your law enforcement apparatus, an independent, clean, law enforcement apparatus. Otherwise, this is going to surpass Colombia and then we're going to have to be there permanently."

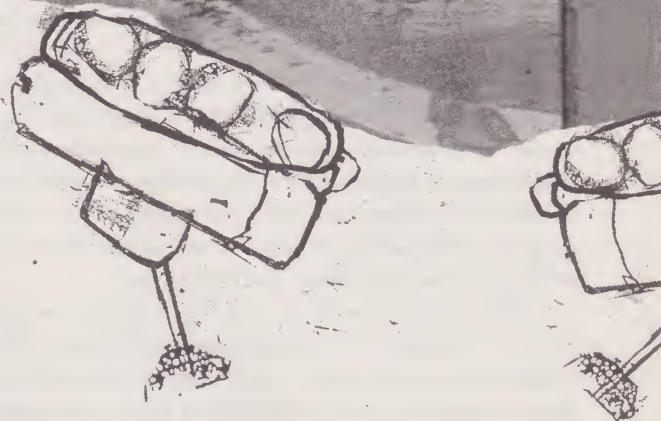
Between the initial talk of retaliation by the United States following the September 11 attacks and the final days of the Taliban, Afghan farmers went out to their fields and planted opium poppies. In spite of the chaos that preceded Operation Enduring Freedom and still engulfs this nation of more than 26 million people, Afghanistan has been reborn as the international leader in heroin production.

"In the turmoil that followed the American-led bombing campaign and fall of the Taliban regime, many impoverished farmers have returned to sowing poppy, which is more profitable than any legal crop," states a report from the Max Planck Institute and RAND Corporation. The RAND Corporation is a conservative think tank originally formed during World War II as a special project of the Department of Defense, or as it was then called, the Department of War. The RAND Corporation has since served often as a consultant to the United States government, and together with the Planck Institute, will monitor heroin production and opium cultivation within post-Taliban Afghanistan for the next five years, hoping to develop the first comprehensive model of the international heroin market.

"The way to think about this is that 2001 [the year opium production dropped in Afghanistan] was an unusual year," says Dr. Peter Reuter, who is co-directing the RAND Corporation's study of heroin trade in post-Taliban Afghanistan. "2002 and 2003 are quite consistent with what was happening in the late 1990s, maybe a little higher."

Two reports from within the United Nations echo the findings of the Max Planck Institute and the RAND Corporation.

"The power vacuum in Kabul caused by the aftermath of 11 September 2001 enabled farmers to replant opium poppy begin-



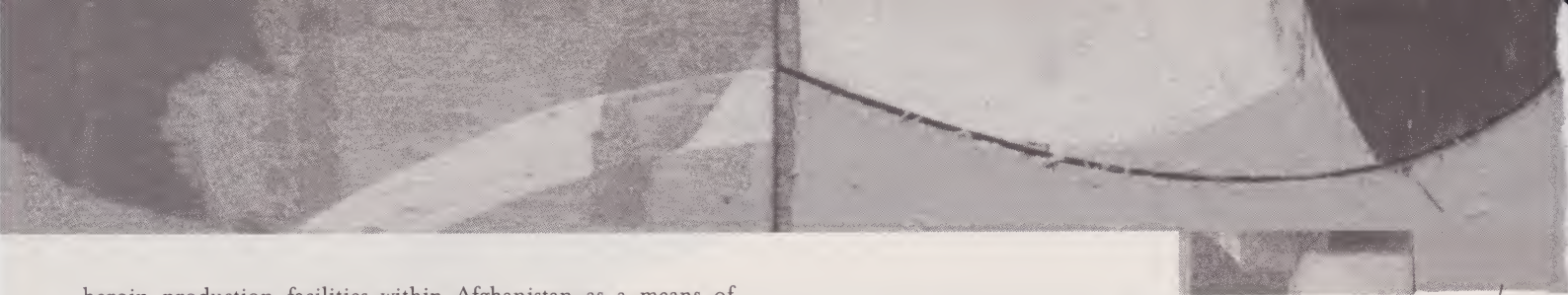
ning in October and November 2001," states the 2002 Afghanistan Opium survey, conducted by the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime. "In Afghanistan, the political and social situation has contributed to the continued opium cultivation in that country and smuggling of opiates from that country," reads the 2002 annual report by the International Narcotics Control Board, an independent and quasi-judicial organ of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Despite repeated queries, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime in Kabul, Afghanistan could not be reached for a comment.

A brief history of opium, Afghanistan, and the US.

The cultivation and sale of opium has been part of Afghanistan's culture and society for centuries, annually producing little more than 100 tons, most of which never left the Middle East. Iran was historically the destination for much of Afghanistan's opium and heroin until the early 20th Century. However, following the 1979 Iranian revolution, Iran began to harvest more opium on its own, no longer relying on supplies from the two other countries that make up the "Golden Crescent"—Pakistan and Afghanistan. This effectively freed up the heroin produced in Afghanistan for export via secured routes that would be established a couple of years later during the Soviet/Afghanistan conflict.

The United States government lost a strategic Middle Eastern outpost when Ayatollah Khomeini and his Islamic regime took over Iran in 1979. The year before, pro-Soviet Afghanis overthrew the dictator Sardar Mohammad Daoud, easing the way for the December 1979 Soviet invasion of the country. With little regional stability on an already tenuous front of the Cold War, President Jimmy Carter, who had previously banned major Central Intelligence Agency covert operations, quickly moved to support the Afghan resistance, the Mujaheddin. Carter's orders meant the US was getting involved with people who had already established



heroin production facilities within Afghanistan as a means of financial support.

In an interview with Alfred W McCoy, author of *The Politics of Heroin*, Dr. David Musto, a White House advisor on drugs to the Carter administration, says he warned the government of the implications of siding with the Mujaheddin. "I told the council [White House Strategy Council on Drug Abuse] . . . that we were going into Afghanistan to support the opium growers in their rebellion against the Soviets," he told McCoy.


With support from the United States government against the USSR in Afghanistan, the Mujaheddin took advantage of the newly established secure lines of transportation as well as the immunity afforded to anti-Communist allies and began to smuggle heroin out of the country. By the late 1980s, *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* reported that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of a fundamental Islamic Afghani guerilla group, in cooperation with Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence, harvested opium which was later transported to Pakistan for international trade. In May 1990, the *Washington Post* revealed that the United States failed to investigate Hekmatyar and his connections to heroin trafficking because "US narcotics policy in Afghanistan has been subordinated to the war against Soviet influence there."

While the enemies have changed from Communists to Terrorists, the players have stayed very much the same in Afghanistan, insists Reese Erlich, a freelance journalist who reported from Afghanistan shortly after the US invasion began.

"The drug dealers are the warlords, which are allied with the US," he explains. "The US doesn't want to admit it, but it's true. Afghanistan is now the number-one heroin producer in the world. It took less than six months for them to re-emerge, for the very simple reason that there is no other industry in Afghanistan. If you're a warlord and you want to feed your men, the cheapest way to do that is to grow poppies and make tremendous profits.

"It's a political problem, not a drug problem," Erlich continues. "There were no lack of warnings from the UN and Pakistani intelligence and all kinds of people. The US knew what would happen, but it cynically figures most of the heroin will end up in Western Europe, so it's not a US problem."

Erlich is right. Despite Afghanistan's role in the international heroin market, only a small amount actually makes it to the United States of America. Afghan heroin's peak in the United States market was a brief period in the early 1980s—the same period as the initial stages of the Soviet/Afghan conflict. But by the year 2000, heroin from Afghanistan accounted for 70 percent of the world's opium, 80 percent of which was headed for Western Europe. The Helmand district of Nad-E-Ali, located in Southeast Afghanistan, alone accounted for 10 percent of the world's opium at the time, more than five times the amount of opium produced in Colombia.



dr. David Musto, a White House advisor on drugs to the Carter administration, told the White House "that we were going into Afghanistan to support the opium growers in their rebellion against the Soviets."

The previous year, 1999, was the highest recorded annual opium production in Afghanistan, harvesting a potential of 4,600 tons.

However, in July 2000, the Taliban officially banned opium poppy farming in Afghanistan, though it could not enforce its ban in areas under the control of the Northern Alliance. The ban, which was announced by Mullah Omar at the behest of international pressure, resulted in an estimated loss of income for 3.3 million people, according to the United Nations. The figure includes "80,000 farmers and their families (480,000 people), plus 480,000 itinerant laborers and their families (2.8 million people)." Following the ban, the United States rewarded the Taliban with \$43 million in aid, though the government maintained its sanctions against the regime for harboring Osama Bin Laden.

The 2001 opium harvest was the lowest recent opium crop in Afghanistan—a mere 185 metric tons were harvested. But one year later, after the United States-led bombing campaign of Afghanistan toppled the Taliban, the potential production of opium for the 2002 harvest season had been estimated to be nearly 3,400 metric tons—an 18-fold increase.

Not long after the first bombs of Operation Enduring Freedom were dropped, the *London Guardian* reported on opium production in Afghanistan. Speaking to reporter James Meek on the condition of anonymity, a heroin dealer in Kabul explained the resurgence:

"If there was serious government pressure, the peasants would stop growing poppies, especially if they were given free fertilizers and free seeds for other crops.' He paused and thought again. 'Then again, the peasants might choose not to. When they're earning so much from the poppies, it's not very likely. People will still grow poppies in secret. People get richer that way.'"

Meek also interviewed a farmer, who spoke on record only if his real name was not used. According to the farmer, the opium poppy harvest is not so much a choice as much as it is a necessity. "We needed to feed our families," explained the Afghani farmer.

Desperate people will resort to desperate measures.

The farmer's simple logic—that desperate people will resort to desperate measures—was echoed in the halls of the UN. The United Nations had already warned of the potential return to opium as a source of income for the people of Afghanistan. But it assumed—overly optimistically, in retrospect—that donor nations and the support pledged by countries like the United States could stave off this possibility. Afghanistan, reads the 2002 Global Illicit Drug Trends report, "can count on the readiness of the donor countries and the aid agencies to provide large-scale support for addressing the humanitarian crisis and helping with the reconstruction of this country. This offers the element needed for a humanitarian approach to sustaining the prohibition of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan." Given adequate aid and substitute crops, the report explains, Afghanistan's role as a producer in the world heroin market could change.

According to RAND's Dr. Reuter, that type of change has happened elsewhere. "A number of countries have, through general economic development, gotten out of producing opium," he points out. "A couple of generations ago Macedonia was a major producer for the illicit market and Macedonia is not rich by European standards, but it's rich by the standards of opium producing countries, so it doesn't produce opium anymore. It's not a result of drug policy but just of general success in general, economic development.

"If Afghanistan were to develop rapidly over the next few years, then that would have an effect, would lead to reductions in opium production," continues Reuter. "That doesn't mean that's the only way of doing it. But it certainly, historically, is the way it has had the most enduring effect."

But aid never arrived in the amounts fully pledged. While the Bush administration continues to trumpet the role that its humanitarian aid assistance is playing in building a "brighter future of freedom, hope, and opportunity," for Afghanistan, the reality is that before, during, and after the US's bombing campaign in Afghanistan, the aid that was given was severely lacking in quantity and poorly administered, in some cases serving only to worsen local conditions of starvation, illness, violence, and instability.

"The donor nations have failed to pledge the money that Afghanistan needs and to provide in a timely manner even what they have pledged," says Jim Jennings, who has traveled to Afghanistan as founder and president of the non-government-organization Conscience International. "Compare [the US's humanitarian aid] to what we're spending to keep the military forces there in an unfocused and hopeless mission; it's a billion dollars a month. In just a few months that comes out to more money than all the countries in the world have offered to help Afghanistan. So when the US government says we're in Afghanistan

and Iraq for humanitarian aid with our armies, that rings hollow. The real money is being spent on the military and token amounts are being spent on humanitarian aid."

Between donor conferences in Tokyo in January 2002 and July 2003, the United States delivered a total of \$700 million in reconstruction aid to Afghanistan. The conference ultimately pledged \$4 billion in aid from different countries, but by July 2003, according to Hamid Karazi, the president of Afghanistan, only a fraction of the pledges had been collected and that the implemented humanitarian aid programs had done little to help the country's employment crisis. In January of last year, Karazi tried to re-establish a ban on opium cultivation in Afghanistan: the resistance to his ban was greater than the struggling government could challenge.

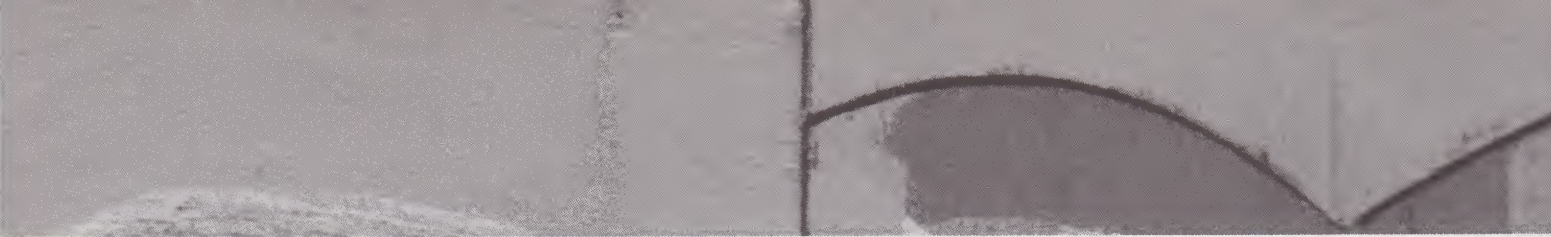
With its usual hubris, the State Department boasts that "the US government is leading the international community in responding to this humanitarian crisis." According to the State Department, US AID (United States Agency for International Development) has been using "every available means" to give relief to the country, including providing blankets and winterized tents to refugees and rebuilding water and irrigation systems. The State Department has also said that 80 percent of the food aid brought to Afghanistan through the UN's World Food Program came from the United States, and that the US "will continue to be the lead donor."

What the State Department didn't mention is that the World Food Program and numerous other NGO and private humanitarian efforts were halted or drastically scaled back because of the US bombing campaign, though these efforts have since been restored. Most of the food aid that the United States boasts of was delivered by aerial food drops, which numerous aid agencies, including Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam, have described as the "worst" way to deliver food in the most heavily landmined country in the world, with over 10 million undetonated mines remaining from over two decades of conflict. As a result, the most vulnerable and needy were the least likely to get the dropped food.

Given the conditions in Afghanistan, it's not surprising many farmers have returned to poppy cultivation, and that others will follow suit.

"The UN and United States are doing very little to help the farmers to switch from opium production to regular wheat and other things," says professor Wahab. "The government has a very small army—only 4,000 soldiers. The warlords command 10,000 to 20,000 soldiers. You can't control a country the size of Texas with 4,000 soldiers, who are also demoralized and afraid and have ethnic loyalties. The UN and central government are not following through on promises and support to get the farmers to switch agriculture practices."

As early as February of 2002, the United Nations began warn-



ing of a return to widespread opium cultivation. The International Narcotics Board's 2002 report warned "opium production in Afghanistan in 2002 is of the same magnitude as during the mid-1990s." Later that year, the United Nations annual Global Illicit Drug Trends report warned that Afghanistan would very likely resume its place as world leader in opium cultivation. The Council on Foreign Relations, in conjunction with the Markle Foundation, says that "unless Afghan farmers have viable economic alternatives, many of them will return to poppy cultivation, fueling drug problems around the world."

These alternatives will not come soon, says Dr. Peter Reuter. "Crop substitution programs or eradication programs require a stable and effective government. At the moment, that's not in Afghanistan."

To make matters worse, with the start of the Iraq war, Afghanistan all but dropped off the United States' radar screen. This past February, President George W. Bush bizarrely failed to request a single dollar in his administration's 2003 budget for aid to Afghanistan, leaving it up to Congress to find about \$300 million for continued aid efforts. This oversight was attributed to the fact that US AID officials didn't know how much money was needed for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, so they simply didn't ask. Compared to the US's expected total expenditures of \$16 billion on foreign aid in 2002, with the largest chunks heading to Iraq, Israel, and Jordan, and the sheer magnitude of the reconstruction project in Afghanistan, \$300 million from Congress is a mere drop in the bucket.

"The US basically lost interest after it overthrew the Taliban," says reporter Erlich. "The US came in and was going to do this big model project rebuilding the road from Kabul to Kandahar [shortly after the war]. A few months ago, there still wasn't a single vehicle on this road or any kind of repair going on. If that's what they did with what was supposed to be this big model project, think what they've done with all the promised projects like building schools."

The US State Department's Office of International Information Program notes that Afghanistan was the number one recipient for US aid even before the September 11 attacks, with \$174 million in aid devoted to the country in 2000. After this February's debacle, the Bush administration announced in July that it was preparing a new \$1 billion aid package for Afghanistan, with a focus on job creation, building the national army and police, education, and programs to help women enter the work force. A tidy sum, but one that pales compared to the billions heading Iraq's way—in April 2003 alone the Department of Defense raised \$1.7 billion for the reconstruction of Iraq—and nowhere near the amount need to sustain the country without the financial help of opium production.

"There has been so much degradation of infrastructure over many years of war," says Jennings. "That includes the loss of 50 percent of the irrigation capability and the massive amounts of unexploded [mine] ordinance—that's not something easily fixed. That also impacts the health care system because you have 25 to 30 people getting killed every week and animals [that] die stepping on land mines."

Additionally, Human Rights Watch reports that attacks on women in Afghanistan have actually increased since the Taliban lost power, preventing most women and girls from going to school or working—a situation which further hurts various sectors of Afghanistan's economy.

"Human rights abuses in Afghanistan are being committed by gunmen and warlords who were propelled into power by the United States and its coalition partners after the Taliban fell in 2001," says Brad Adams, executive director of Human Rights Watch Asia Division. "These men and others have essentially hijacked the country outside of Kabul. With less than a year to go before national elections, Afghanistan's human rights situation appears to be worsening."


The US party line: "It's a rather daunting problem . . ."

This scenario of lawlessness and a lack of infrastructure is, after all, the ideal condition for heroin production and trafficking. Of course, if humanitarian aid had been adequately received, the current wave of heroin production and opium cultivation would not have ceased, but it might not have grown to its current pandemic proportions. It is also worth noting the priorities of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the State Department in relation to funding directed towards combating Afghanistan's heroin production and trafficking.

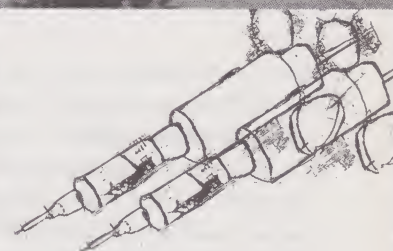
"The mistake Washington is making is to militarize the whole situation and conflict and to try to seek a military solution, instead of, say, an economic, political, and cultural solution," says Wahab.

Since June 2002, the DEA has been part of a coordinated campaign to disrupt the flow of heroin coming out of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Along with 25 other countries and involving DEA agents in nine foreign offices, 1,705,715 kilograms of heroin had been seized by May 2003 in a time span of just under 50 days, according to DEA officials. The multi-national campaign—entitled Operation Containment—was briefly noted during a recent report on international drug trafficking to the Senate Judiciary Committee and praised by the DEA as "one of the most successful drug interdiction initiatives to be undertaken on a multi-regional basis, and it has become a benchmark for future cooperative international programs."

Operation Containment, which has so far cost the DEA \$15 million of its \$207.5 million Foreign Cooperative Investigations



despite the touted “success” of Operation Containment, Afghanistan’s resurgence as the world’s leading heroin supplier has not been contained. Out of 635 positions under the DEA’s Foreign Cooperative Investigations division, there are only two agents on the ground in Afghanistan



budget, was conceived in February 2002. According to Steve W Casteel, intelligence chief of the DEA, the mission of the multinational interdiction campaign was “to seize as much southwestern Asian heroin as possible before it reached the lucrative markets of Western Europe and the United States.”

Casteel, who mentioned Operation Containment near the conclusion of his report to the Senate committee, further noted that the heroin seized has an estimated value of between \$28 and \$50 million. But Casteel never mentioned the estimated rise in opium cultivation in Afghanistan, which is more than twice the size of Operation Containment’s total seizure.

Despite the touted “success” of Operation Containment, Afghanistan’s resurgence as the world’s leading heroin supplier has not been contained. Out of 635 positions under the DEA’s Foreign Cooperative Investigations division, there are only two agents on the ground in Afghanistan—a number so low it causes one to question the government’s dedication, especially in light of the total effort and financial support given to Colombia, the largest producer of cocaine and heroin in the Western Hemisphere.

Whereas the reach of Afghanistan’s heroin is far more devastating on a global level, Colombia has garnered more attention from the United States government—or at least the numbers would say so. In 2001, the State Department budgeted \$279.3 million for international narcotics control within its Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs—which includes funding for drug interdiction in Afghanistan. No money was set aside by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs for Plan Colombia, a year-old strategy for “promoting the peace process, combating the narcotics industry, reviving the Colombian economy, and strengthening the democratic pillars of Colombian society.” That year Colombia produced 4.3 metric tons of opium, amounting to only four percent of the world’s heroin.

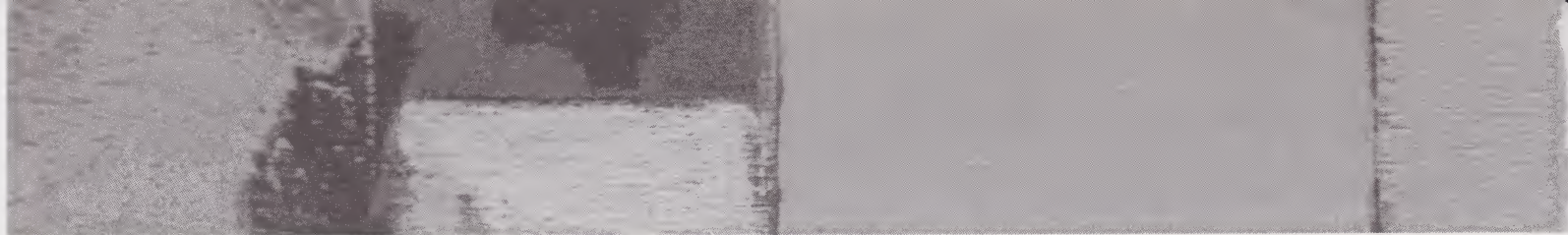
This year, the budget for International Narcotics Control was cut down to \$152.2 million while the budget for Plan Colombia and the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, which now falls under the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, stands at \$731 million. Within a period of three years, the International Narcotics Control budget has been slashed almost in half while the budget for Plan Colombia rose from zero in 2001 to \$731 million.

The United States has been providing monetary aid to Colombia since the mid-1990s, when coca production in Colombia began to surpass that of Peru and Bolivia. The South American country currently accounts for 90 percent of cocaine consumed in the United States, and approximately 60 percent of the heroin. Before 1998, 90 percent of US aid to Colombia’s was going to the country’s number one anti-drug agency, the National Police. But the amount and destination of US funds changed dramatically after 1998, following a meeting between former US Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Colombia’s Defense Minister Rodrigo Lloreda.

Cohen and Lloreda decided to significantly increase aid to Colombia while shifting the money away from Colombia’s police to its military. The Colombian military, US officials argued, was in danger of losing its war against Marxist FARC rebels who were growing in strength and sophistication due to increased revenue from drug production. Here began the melding of Colombia’s counter-narcotics program with its counter-insurgency effort.

The war on terrorism has caused important shifts in US funding to Colombia. The South American country is also the ninth largest supplier of oil to the United States, providing almost 300,000 barrels of oil a day. Aid from the US to Colombia now includes providing security support for the Limon-Covenas oil pipeline, owned by the US oil company Occidental. As the pipeline has been attacked more than 100 times by guerrilla forces, the Bush administration has pledged an additional \$98 million to Colombia’s 2003 foreign aid package to help the Colombian army patrol and protect the pipeline. While the package is awaiting approval before Congress, the pipeline protection program will in the meantime receive \$6 million under a recently signed emergency counter-terrorism bill, which effectively combines all counter-narcotics efforts with counter-terrorism efforts. The bill thus allows the Colombian army to use all forms of aid and support, including funds, training, weapons and helicopters, to fight insurgent groups now labeled as terrorists. “With the stroke of a pen, billions of dollars of drug-war aid suddenly became ‘counter-terror’ aid,” one analyst of the bill said.

The \$15 million spent on Operation Containment in Afghanistan is a mere fraction of the more than one billion dollars



spent on Colombia alone, but Paul Simon, the assistant secretary for the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, doesn't see it that way.

Looking at the big picture, says Simon, the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs budget has risen, with a request standing of nearly \$1 billion for the 2004 fiscal year. With plans to direct \$731 million of that request—almost nine times the amount set aside for other international counter drug efforts—towards Colombia and the Andean counter-narcotics initiative, Simon counters that—despite numbers that clearly point to the contrary—there has not been a trend of fund reduction in the Afghanistan drug interdiction effort.

"I think it [the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs budget] reflects the importance the administration continues to attach to international drug and crime control strategies," says Simon.

When asked to explain the funding difference between Colombia, whose heroin output pales in comparison to the opium cultivation and heroin production in Afghanistan, the state department assistant secretary explains it as a matter of US national interest.

"Most of the cocaine and heroin [in the United States] comes from the Andes, so from a US domestic perspective, that's the part of the world that poses the most direct, immediate threat to our citizens," he says. "That's where the funding has been concentrated, but we do have programs underway elsewhere in the world where there are significant drug problems and issues that we feel there is a US national interest in addressing, so it's not to the exclusion of Afghanistan."

Simon further explains Afghanistan from the perspective of the US State Department.

"Basically, in the case of Afghanistan, you have to build institutions up from scratch. In Colombia, you have a functioning national police, you have an army that's been involved in the drug war, you have a drug control strategy, you have high level political support, and you have many years of work with counterparts that are very experienced, who have training, who you can work with," he continues. "In the case of Afghanistan, we and the others—the UN and the British—we have to build a drug control capability from scratch. Nothing like that ever existed before, so we have to create that capacity in the police, we have to create interdiction units, we have to create eradication units, we have to train them, equip them, we have to create alternative livelihood strategies for farmers that never existed before, so, it's a total, kind of grass-roots, starting-from-zero type of challenge. Added to that challenge is the fact that the government doesn't really have security control on the country sides. It's a rather daunting problem out there."

That this "rather daunting problem" is in part a direct result of US involvement, policies, and intervention of not only the last two years but the last two decades doesn't enter into Simon's explanation.

"I really do believe that the US has failed on the ground in Afghanistan and as soon as the foreigners leave, there will be a civil war again," says Dr. Wahab.

"They'd probably end up killing themselves."

Dr. Zaher Wahab has five sisters in Afghanistan—three in Kabul and two in his countryside, childhood home of Ghazni. His mother lives in Ghazni too. Though he has not held a permanent address in Afghanistan for decades, Wahab, an American citizen, says that the decimated country is forever his homeland. So when the first bombs of Operation Enduring Freedom were dropped, Wahab says he was seized by great internal conflict. He struggles to describe those feelings, ultimately relating it as if one half of his body was battling with the other.

"I really do believe that the US has failed on the ground in Afghanistan and as soon as the foreigners leave, there will be a civil war again," says Wahab. "Things that were promised are not there—in other words law and order, economic development, social services, stability, security, ending the drug production and bringing regional stability—none of that is really happening right now."

Down the coast from Dr. Wahab's office in Oregon and thousands of miles west of Kabul, Afghanistan, on a Tuesday night in August, it's a few minutes before eight p.m. The line in Duboce Alley behind the Castro Safeway in San Francisco has grown shorter. The San Francisco Aids Foundation HIV Prevention Project is close to calling it a night when another client—a young man—arrives. He is out of breath and gasping for air from running to make it before the exchange ends tonight. In an oversized Aeropostale athletics sweatshirt, windbreaker pants, and Nike Air Trainers, his hollow voice asks for 600 needles. The slender white male, whose head is clean shaved, explains that he lives in a house with "others." He has the dirty needles to prove it. Tek Chog begins to pick boxes of needles off the grey cart and into the young man's backpack.

Overhearing Alicia Rigby recall last years heroin humors, Chog asks, "is it white powder?"

Rigby nods. Both remark that the purity, grade, and dosage of Afghan white powder heroin are quite different from Mexican "Black Tar," which is the most common heroin on the street in San Francisco.

"I don't know if people around here would know what to do with it [Afghan heroin]," Chog says, concerned. "They'd probably end up killing themselves." ©

Additional reporting by Kari Lyderson and David Montero.

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EL ROCK NO TIENE LA

THE COUNTERCULTURE OF MEXICO CITY
FIGHTS TO KEEP THE 23-YEAR-OLD
TIANGUIS DEL CHOPO MARKET ALIVE

Every Saturday, the subway stations Guerrero and Buenavista in Mexico City are filled to the brim with freaks and weirdos. Waves of kids arrive by the thousands wearing Ramones T-shirts, mohawks, colored hair, tattoos, and piercings. They jump in front of ravers, skaters, crusties, ska-punks, skinheads, metalheads, dopeheads, deadheads, rappers, rastas, and just plain old rockers, as they all head for the Tianguis del Chopo market, the epicenter of counterculture in Mexico. In its 23 years the market has served not only as a place to buy and sell the latest cassettes, T-shirts, instruments, and jewelry, but also as a gathering place for young people. It's the place to meet *toda la banda*—the whole scene—for music fans of all types.

Although el Chopo is as popular as ever, drawing 8,000 to 10,000 visitors every Saturday, the future of this urban mecca is in serious jeopardy. The city is planning to close down the market to make way for an enormous public building project. Now patrons, vendors, and organizers are trying to build a coalition to either prevent the closure or relocate the market.

The story of the market began in 1980. Up until then, rock-'n'-roll had been basically ruled illegal by Mexican authorities and the government of President López Portillo. In the early '70s there had been a rock festival, the *Festival de Rock y Ruedas*—Festival of Rock and Wheels—in Avándaro, a small town outside of Mexico City. Avándaro was basically considered the "Woodstock of Mexico" and was marked by plenty of drug use, open sex, destruction of property, and clashes with the police. From that point, what concerts

did take place occurred in what were known as *funkis*, *hoyos*, or *hoyos funkis*—literally, "funky holes." They were underground shows held in houses, abandoned warehouses, or in the backs of trucks used for fast getaways.

All of that changed near the end of 1980, when the Museum of the University of el Chopo opened an exhibition about rock'n'roll and invited a few local vendors to sell their own books and albums in order to draw public interest. It was a huge success—the exhibit that was scheduled to last a month stretched to nearly a year. Hordes of rock fans, both young and old, gathered around the museum every Saturday to meet, hang out, and to do all the other things that punk rockers do. Due to the huge success of the market, the Museum organized the first public punk festival in Mexican history.

Before long, more vendors began selling their own goods, independently, outside of the doors of museum. Much of the trade



ck CULPA

by David Thompson



between these *choperos*, as the vendors were called, and fans was done by barter—swapping tapes, homemade T-shirts for the vendors' goods. Other, less wholesome items such as drugs and homemade booze were also traded at the market and spread not only through the punk population but even to the more "respectable" attendees such as vendors and the police.

Before long the surging crowds, the rampant drug use, and the events that occurred at the second—more destructive—music festival roused the ire of the authorities. The market was forced to leave the University of el Chopo Museum, and find a new location. This search for the perfect spot would continue, as each location proved too tame for this roving hotbed of counterculture vitality. It wasn't until 1988 that el Chopo finally opened in what everyone thought was its final destination.

We're Not In Kansas Anymore

Entering from the subway to the south in the early afternoon, el Chopo looks like one huge festival, as a huge, packed sea of kids hand out flyers, hang out, form drum circles, skate, shop, or try to sell stuff. On the south side of Aldama Street a flood of kids overflow into the roadway in front of a local bar and several shops that sell music and memorabilia. On the north side of the street, tourists and casual shoppers struggle to dodge waves of skaters, as their skateboards fly back and forth, occasionally spiraling out of control, and their friends hang out, covering every square inch of curb.

Skaters, like Rebel and Josofat, say they prefer to skate in the

market because it's free—all the official skate parks in Mexico City charge for admission. As a result, skating in el Chopo is open and safe for kids of all socio-economic groups, whereas other skate spots in town populated by either rich kids (who look down on and bully less fortunate kids) or poor kids (of a more dangerous disposition). In addition, Rebel adds, it's the only skate spot in town where you can come to hang out with all your friends and meet lots of new people. "Where else are you going to see all types of skaters hanging out with 60-year-old music fans and punks with mohawks?" he asks.

Street performers set up camp throughout the market. You can always find musicians with saxophones, trumpets, guitars and, of course, drum circles scattered throughout the grounds. Jugglers and fire-eaters give the market a carnival-like atmosphere. The streets are lined with stands where vendors sell food, music, posters, clothes, sweets, guitars, and just about anything else you can imagine while people hand out flyers by the thousands to the patrons that enter the main part of the market. Reggae and ska music blares from both sides of the street.

As they enter the center of the market, the crowd crams together, pushing in between the rows of covered stalls occupied by the older vendors of the "official" association of the *tianguis*. These stalls range from those selling rock, psychedelic, and blues albums from the '30s onward to those who specialize in selling grind and death metal, ska-punk, electro-goth, or Mexican rock. Here you can buy books, a leather corset that features removable tit-flaps,

and an authentic Nazi-issue SS hat. You can even get an open-air tattoo before you take your new Manu Chao and Los Crudos albums to nearby vegan taco vendors where you sit down with your friends for a cool *cerveza*.

Every market-day there's a show on the main stage. Underground and independent bands of all types gravitate to el Chopo from not only Mexico City but throughout the country and beyond. Poncho from the ska-punk band La Coyota was happy to travel from his home in the state of Sonora to play the market without being paid because it provided a live audience of thousands who would otherwise never have heard his band. In the same space one can often see more well-known bands, poetry recitals, impassioned speeches, art shows and book signings as well as other events, all organized by the *Asociación Tianguis el Chopo* (the official association of el Chopo vendors). The association also runs a radio station where bands, speakers, and poets can be heard through broadcasts not only of music but also of cultural programming and political dialogues. The different collectives that make up the Tianguis el Chopo association organize some of these events, depending on their interests, but their main function is to protect the market and the business interests of those involved in it.

The New Generation

Just beyond the "stage" area of the market, a row of dreadlocked, dirty, and mohawked punk rockers sit clustered around rows and rows of hardcore cassettes, classic punk albums, patches and T-shirts, fanzines, stickers, and more specialized merchandise like hair dye or vegan shampoos. It's a layout significantly different from the more professional stands of the official vendors. In the middle of this pack, a conspicuous group of skinheads mingle with their neighbors behind a display of classic and Latino *oi* and reggae tapes, CDs, and patches.

"We put ourselves in a space that we won [by squatting] over a series of years, to sell our things and to avoid the problems that they [members of the official market] have to deal with," explains a skinhead named Skandal, a member of the RASH (Red Anarchist SkinHeads) collective, "like paying taxes." Skandal sells here, he says, "to make a little bit of money, and because the things that we sell are very difficult to find; we want the people in Mexico to

understand what we are doing and know more about it."

The goods sold in this part of the market are markedly cheaper than those in the "official" part of the market. A T-shirt here generally sells for three or four dollars and CDs go for a buck or two, but in the official part of the market T-shirts cost up to \$10, and a CD can cost anywhere from \$3 to \$15. Vendors make very little money from selling here in the *espacio anarko-punk*—anarko-punk space; they mostly do it for fun, to make scarce merchandise available, and to spread their ideas to a broader audience.

Giovanni, a vendor who looks like a gutter-transplant from Minneapolis, notes several differences between the two areas. "First of all there is little difference between their [the official vendors] prices and those of a store," he says. "Here we sell things cheaper and are involved in other things as well; the people here are involved in collectives and arrange things—talks, videos, and some other public activities—in cultural spaces elsewhere."

Giovanni also points to the official market's past and how much it has changed since then. "The market began 23 years ago. They were trading independent and hard-to-find music and books—completely barter. It was something revolutionary," he says, wistfully. "Now you can go to some of these [official] stands and they are selling Britney Spears albums."

Relations between the two parts of the market are noticeably tense. "The punks have always followed the market," says Pajaro, an older punk vendor of the *Cambio Radical Fuerza Positiva* (Positive Radical Change Force Collective), which is a member of the official market association. Since its inception in 1980, Pajaro and other punk rockers have used the space not only to buy and sell, but to meet with friends, party, drink, occasionally do drugs, and have a good time. "They used to hate me," he says of other older, non-punk vendors. Pajaro and his collective joined the official Tianguis el Chopo association in 1994 to provide themselves with better business opportunities and to better fight for the existence of the market, which has been under pressure from the government and police since the beginning. He refers to the vendors of the *espacio anarko-punk* as "the new generation," however, and seemed to support them although they steadily refuse to cooperate politically with the official market association.

Despite Pajaro's laconic enthusiasm, some view the *espacio*



anarko-punk as a black mark on the image of the market, equating the occasional drunken or drug-influenced punk with the space in general. "The punks have always been the cancer of el Chopo," says vendor, scenester, and association co-founder Jorge Barragán, "although they sometimes scare people and disrupt things, refuse to cooperate, they've been here since the beginning, and are as much a part of the market as anyone. Although they're like our disease, they're also necessary." Although he is generally a critic, Barragán is openly friendly and respectful of the anarko-punk vendors and their political radicalism, because he believes they are the "only truly revolutionary group in the market."

It's unclear whether the negative sentiments about the anarko-punk vendors are primarily those of the government and police forces in the area or rather the official vendors in el Chopo. Many of the anarko-punks believe that the older, more successful vendors are the ones to blame for the increased police presence and harassment they've experienced at the hands of market security guards. They contend that the official vendors have done this in an effort to protect their business interests. Because the anarko-punk vendors don't pay taxes and occupy a certain space, there has always been a certain amount of pressure placed on them by security guards, who are hired by the official market association, but over the last few years, police have been forcing them to make their spaces smaller and smaller, as well as to move farther and farther away from the center of the *tianguis*. The result is that within the somewhat-marginalized *espacio anarko-punk* there are large groups of vendors selling lots of stuff in an incredibly tiny, crowded space, on the ground, without the ability to erect shelters or shades for fear of appearing "official" and thus provoking the wrath of the officials.

In addition, police monitoring is high in this area and near the skate area, because these groups are considered dangerous or bad elements. "There are a lot more police lately," says Rebel. Although he admits that there are some people that smoke pot and drink among the skaters, he notes that several of the drug dealers have stopped coming there but police pressure was higher than ever.

¡Oh No Gobierno!

Recently, the Secretary of Public Education (SEP), the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Conaculta), and presi-

dent Vicente Fox announced that construction on the *Biblioteca de Mexico José Vasconcelos*—more commonly known as the "megalibrary"—will begin on October 4th of this year, exactly 15 years after el Chopo's arrival to this spot. The library will cover the entire space that the market now occupies.

"No one knows what will happen to us," says Barragán. "We have a few places that we are working on with the delegation [the local government]," he says, "but still, nothing is sure."

While most people seem sure that the market will continue somewhere, a suitable location will have to be found, negotiations made, and money paid to the government. None of this will be easy to arrange, especially for those vendors who make a meager living by selling cheap records and other things here. However, hope is still alive and well in el Chopo.

"Some of us are thinking of packing up our bags if the market has to move. I've been here for 23 years and I'm tired of having to fight with the police and government," says Antonio Díaz, vendor and psychedelic music specialist at el Chopo.

Railroad union leader Salvador Zarco can be found every Saturday in el Chopo handing out flyers and asserting what he sees as the consequences of this impending construction project. He wants people to realize that to make way for the library, the city will effectively damage the livelihood of the market vendors, and furthermore that the project will cost hundreds of millions of dollars at a time in a city where 40 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty.

Patrons of the market are beginning to join the outcry. Recently, they've begun to carry signs with them on Saturdays, hold demonstrations, and wear T-shirts that say, *el rock no tiene la culpa*—it's not the fault of rock.

Despite fear and uncertainty about what lies ahead, those of *Tianguis el Chopo* aren't going to give up easily. "We have another place in mind for the move [the abandoned theatre *Cine Tlateloco*]," says Barragán, "but first we're going to fight." ©

David Thompson is from Oklahoma and now lives in Mexico City. If you want to play at el Chopo or elsewhere in Mexico City, he has offered to help. Comments or questions or whatever to dave@magisterludi.net, por favor.

WHILE MOST PEOPLE SEEM SURE THAT THE MARKET WILL CONTINUE SOMEWHERE, A SUITABLE LOCATION WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND, NEGOTIATIONS MADE, AND MONEY PAID TO THE GOVERNMENT. NONE OF THIS WILL BE EASY TO ARRANGE, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE VENDORS WHO MAKE A MEAGER LIVING BY SELLING CHEAP RECORDS AND OTHER THINGS HERE. HOWEVER, HOPE IS STILL ALIVE AND WELL IN EL CHOPO.



When I was 22 I made men jerk off. When I was 23, I stopped. This is my story.

Like millions of writers, I traded my hometown for New York City. I figured one glance at my résumé—featuring experience writing headlines like “Where’s the Beef? Back on America’s Dinner Table”—and I’d be invited into *The New Yorker’s* gilded literary circle. Who needed internships? Who needed contacts? Not me.

After three fruitless months, a friend told me that the porn publishing company she worked for was looking for a new editor. Editor. To me, those six letters were like manna after I had spent months in a state of literary starvation. I was uncertain why my friend thought that I, a run-of-the-mill porn enthusiast, was “a natural” for the job, but I leapt at the opportunity. The interview was brief. It went like this:

“When can you start?”

“Next week.”

“We’ll see you then.”

And with that, I spent the next eight soul-sucking months holed up in the offices of a second-rate porn publishing company.

...

Here is a short-list of my employer’s contributions to American literature: *Hot Chocolate*, *Horny Housewives*, *Naughty Neighbors*, *Family Secrets*, *Forbidden Letters*, *Oral Secrets*, *Cuddles*, *Family Taboos*, *Housewives’ Confessions*, *Bedroom Games*, *Best of Outrageous Letters*, *Down ‘N*

Nasty, *Bedroom Games*, and *Family Touch*. When I accepted the position I understood my duties—edit oodles of smut, write photo captions and review videos. And yet, even after that job description, my wildest expectations left me ill-prepared my first morning. I found myself sitting at a particleboard desk with a cup of coffee on one side and a cream cheese bagel on the other, editing lines like, “John dreamed of wearing his mother’s underwear and buttfucking his sister; now was his chance.”

It was both disconcerting and exhilarating. Throughout the day, I had to take 10-minute breaks to quell my throb. I was pretty sure that drinking from the water cooler while exhibiting a hard-on breeched office etiquette. I began to fear that my irrepressible member would become an occupational liability. But what could I do? I was 22 and I had a sex drive that Viagra couldn’t replicate. I didn’t know it then, but in this business a workplace erection was the least of my concerns.

Prior to this job, my writing experience consisted of self-published ‘zines, college magazines, and nonfiction workshops. These formats emphasized creativity and adverbial clauses. Porn, in my *Penthouse Letters*-reading opinion, lacked both. It was my ambition to convey top-shelf prose to low-class literature. I’d construct stroke-off tales that English professors—boggled by my ability to turn a deliveryman’s climax into a religious experience—would praise as genius. I’d be the Pynchon of pussy, the Beuchner of butt-fucking, the Hemingway of hard-ons.

HOW TO DESTROY

"Quit using so many big words," my 40-year-old Jamaican boss told me one week after I began. We were in her office, which was covered from floor to ceiling with unfinished paperwork and poorly lit beaver shots. I kept my hand in my pocket, in an effort to remain erection-less. She shook the pages of my copy at me as they crumpled in her clenched fist. Words like "tumescant" and "insouciant" were crossed out with huge angry x's. "None of our readers will know what you mean," she said. "Especially the prisoners."

Every publication employs a particular writing style in order to appeal to a particular audience. The *New Yorker* tailors its prose to fit the educated; *Lady's Home Journal* speaks directly to stay-at-home housewives. Our readership, for which I was urged to write like a fourth-grader who'd swiped his dad's *Hustler*, was comprised of the barely literate, the lonely, and imprisoned. I know this because I received correspondence bearing correctional institutions insignias. These poorly written letters usually began, "Deer Sir, Stop making grandmas remove their teeth to suck their grandsons' dicks! And another thing, why don't the women screw dogs?" Then they would plead for the addresses of "Laticia" or "Caprice" or other fictional characters. While filed in the trash, such letters provided insight into readers' minds. I

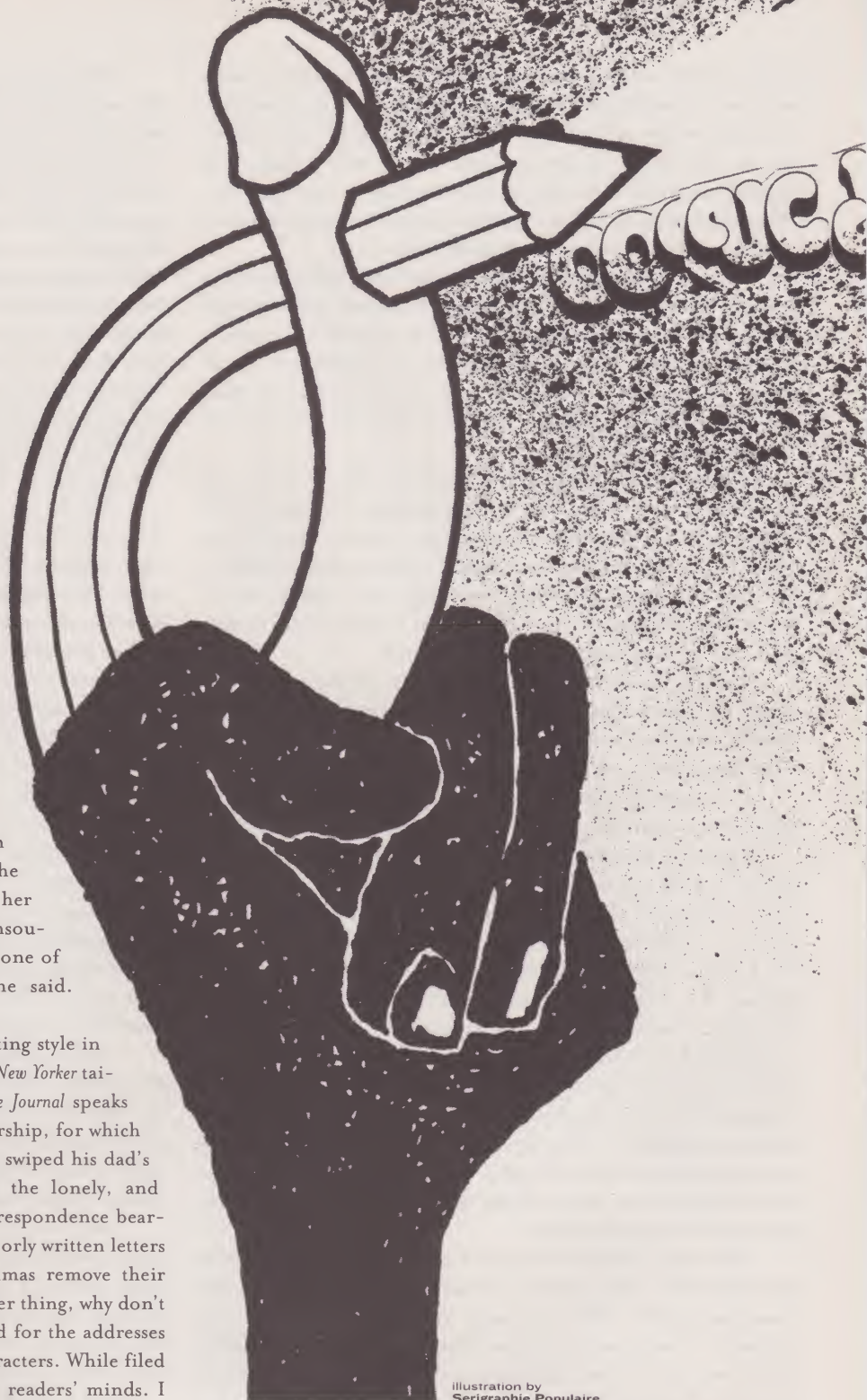


Illustration by
Serigraphie Populaire

YOUR SEX DRIVE

Eight months in the porn industry

By J Bernstein

would've filled readers' requests if I had the choice, but my hands were tied. I would have filled readers' requests if it were possible, but there was one catch: We could only use the stories that my boss had in her special collection. These stories were written long before I was hired—in fact they were written long before I was born. Whoever wrote them did so sometime during the Nixon administration, when I was just a twinkle in my mother's eye.

My boss founded her X-rated empire when she procured a veritable library of uncut '70s pornography stored on floppy disk. She spent a large part of her time transferring the data onto a modern-day IBM. Then she would divide the stories into one of several categories—for example blowjob stories—and amass them into a single digest, in this case, *Oral Secrets*. It was my job to gut the prose and simplify the plot.

Why not just write new perverted drivel? The disco era, as I understood, was a boom time for smut scribes. The demand for these stories was stupendous, but the pay was low: pennies per word. So pornographers became verbose, long-winded, and adjective prone. I spent more time rendering prose readable than I would have if I had written a story from scratch. It was tedious work, but my boss steadfastly stuck to rewrites.

"Josh, it would cost far too much to pay people to write new stories and have you edit them," she explained one afternoon after I had spent three hours editing a sex-on-a-roller-coaster story. "The system isn't perfect, but it's the best I have."

So I resigned myself to this: remove the plot, and leave the fucking lean and mean. Was this what it meant to be an editor?

I spent my days streamlining plot lines until they were as simple as the ones you find in children's books. See Dick. See Jane. See Dick dick Jane. I could've interwoven intricate storylines complete with all the Dickensian twists and turns you could ever want, but I doubt many readers made it past the second page before ejaculating. My company stuck to formulas: deliveryman, naughty schoolgirl, cheerleader. This routine murdered my creativity, like a serial killer at an overnight camp. By the fourth month I forgot everything I'd learned about pacing and development. In the first paragraph a horny housewife would open her door for the washing machine repairman and by the sixth paragraph she'd be saying, "I know another cycle you can spin" before launching into one of three obligatory sex scenes. Delaying the inevitable just made my job harder—no pun intended.

My initial excitement waned as I realized that the porn world was miles from the glamorous illusion Hugh Hefner fed the American public. Porn stars never visited my office. No one received a complimentary coffee-break blowjob. Hell, my office didn't even have a coffee machine. Java-stained beige carpet covered the floor. The blank walls were painted prison-white. Beaver shots were splayed across splintered veneer desks in place of Koosh balls, coffee mugs, and family photos, but other than that the atmosphere was not unlike an accountant's office. My fellow editors and I would edit silently for hours, pausing momentarily to ask each other questions like, "Should 'fuckfest' be one word or two?" or "Do you think a buttfuck daisy chain is a bit too much?"

The drudgery increased exponentially with each passing day, but that was nothing compared to the damage done to my love life. For every climax I created on paper I had one less in the real world. Instead of chatting up young things in bars, I numbed the workday with gin and tonics. When I did talk to girls I lied about my job. "I write," I'd say quickly before switching subjects. I tried telling the truth, but porn disgusted the shy, quiet girls that I adored. "You do what!" they'd exclaim as they looked for the nearest escape. And when gin and white lies enticed the not-so nice girls back to my apartment, my bedroom performance took on twisted bents. I started thinking of myself as a porn character, "slurping clits like they were miniature popsicles" and "blasting enormous payloads of jism." It would turn my stomach. I stopped masturbating. When I came home from work I watched PBS until Budweiser slipped me into a dreamless sleep. I had mixed business with pleasure and I was paying the price.

With sex an unpleasant notion, my pleasure came in new forms. Just for kicks, I would insert my friends' names into my stories. I made my best friend, Andrew Coslow, the pool boy who got off on golden showers; I made Angie Kaylor a blowjob freak; and Kyle Sowash was the dad who was screwing his son. You'd think I'd use my enemies and ex-girlfriends, but they'd never know minimum-security inmates masturbated to their names. My friends did. While revising stories I'd call them and detail their exploits. "Aaron, in this story you're fucking your mom—in the ass!" They'd protest and I'd sit back and laugh. Nothing swayed my decision—we were all going down together.

I took liberties with stories. While archetypal porn characters never went limp, mine started prematurely ejaculating. I made mothers ravage daughters before praying to God for forgiveness. Sons screwed legless, crippled moms exhorting, "My son loves fucking me better than my homemade apple pie!" I wrote lines like "Molly drank enough cum to feed Idaho for a week" and "Jason rode his dad's red ass like a cowboy at the last round-up." My sex scenes became all-out assaults.

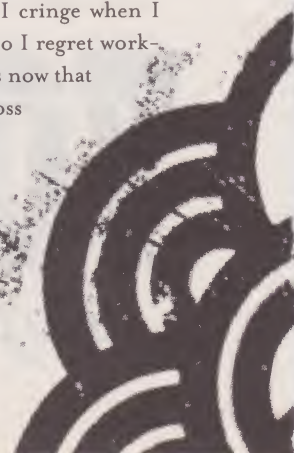
I turned assholes into the Grand Canyon and gag reflexes into Ol' Faithful. Grandfathers ripped out teeth and gummed grandsons with generation-blurring blowjobs. Girls screamed and wailed as obese, sweaty men savaged their virginity. Guys blasted spunk into cavities that should've known no sperm. Jism leaked out. Pets licked it up. Harder, dirtier, faster, further, more, more, more, more, MORE!

And then one September day, nearly eight months after my porn career began, while editing a tale about a son fingering his paralyzed mother, I realized that I was treading on dangerous ground. My work in porn had lead me over a steep arc. It began with the initial excitement, leveled into numb acceptance, and then plummeted into a deep depression that manifested in utter perversion.

So I strolled into my boss' office and quit. I cringe when I imagine what I would have become had I stayed. Do I regret working in porn? No. Girls assume I'm a stud—a bonus now that I've regained my sexual vigor—and I'm never at a loss for cocktail chatter. Will I ever go back? There are not enough money shots in the world, my friends. No way, no how. ©

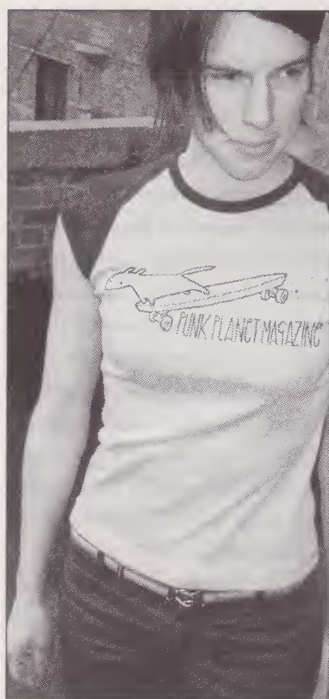


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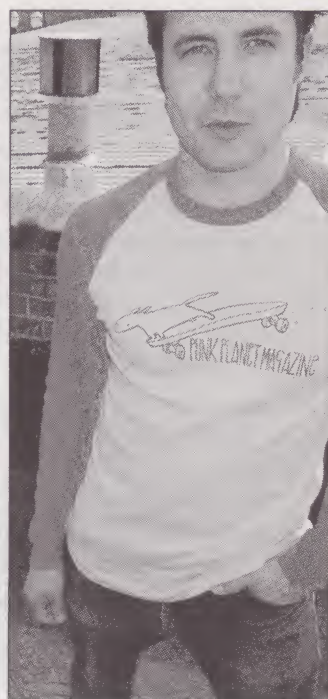
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BUDDHA WITH A MOHAWK

By AC Thompson

NOAH LEVINE FUSES EASTERN RELIGION AND WESTERN REBELLION.

It's about 9:30 on a chilly April morning, and the three-week Iraq war is still in full body-dropping swing, with Abrams tanks trundling across the desert and missiles screaming into Baghdad apartment complexes. Here in San Francisco, about 35 anti-warriors are congregating outside the barricaded doors of an imposing federal office tower. The protesters are religious types driven by their respective scriptural traditions to oppose armed conflict and, on this day, to clasp hands and sing a quavering rendition of "Amazing Grace."

It's an austere-looking, über-earnest crowd: Quakers; members of a group called the Buddhist Peace Fellowship; and Catholics—the bespectacled, robe-clad Franciscan pastor of a nearby parish, and a priest from a Catholic Worker congregation in Berkeley.

Then there's Noah Levine. He's the young guy puffing on a cigarette and cracking jokes. Tattoos crawl down to his fingernails. A black beanie covers his cue-ball head. Dark sunglasses hide his face. This guy looks more like a meth-peddling biker escaped from the state pen than a religious devotee.

The protesters pass the bullhorn to Levine. He takes a long, steady pause, and then begins to speak in a calm, practiced voice. "I choose, inspired by Buddhist practice and understanding, not to see war, not to see hatred, but to look out and see ignorance," Levine says. "Caring, compassion, and generosity are the only things that work . . . We should be, as Mahatma Gandhi said, 'the peace that we wish to see in this world.'"

At 32, Levine is rapidly becoming one of Northern California's most sought-after purveyors of Buddhist wisdom, his schedule crammed with speaking gigs and lectures; and his memoir, *Dharma Punx*, a plainspoken tale of spiritual odyssey, was just released. Practicing Buddhism isn't exactly radical in California, where Hollywooders like Richard Gere photo-op with Tibetan monks, yoga is practically the state pastime—the San Francisco yellow pages alone lists more than 60 yoga studios—and the Dalai Lama literally plays in sold-out stadiums. But Levine also happens to be a card-carrying member of punk—a scene that generally views all things religious with contempt—which makes him something of an iconoclast both in punk circles and in the Buddhist community. There ain't a lot of punkers with "Wisdom" and "Compassion"

inked on their hands. And how many Buddhists have been known to slam dance? Levine, it seems, is a walking paradox, the strange embodiment of two thoroughly incompatible worldviews.

Or maybe he isn't.

"I love being a punk rock Buddhist. I love the contradictions," Levine tells me. "The Buddha said, 'Go forth and speak the dharma [the lessons of the Buddha] in your own idiom.' I know what the Buddha taught, and I phrase it in my own generational perspective."

This intriguing punk-preacher duality has a way of propelling Levine into wildly disparate social settings. One morning he's hanging with a bunch of people who could be his parents—or grandparents—pontificating about the virtues of behaving gently. That afternoon he'll be locked in a room at San Quentin State Prison teaching meditation techniques to a half dozen stone-faced cons. By night, he'll likely be ripping around town in his pristine 1964 Impala, Rancid cranked to II, on his way to see some bile-laden three-chord punk band in some dive bar.

All of this begs the question: How the hell did a scumbag punk rocker from Santa Cruz come to be regarded as a serious guide to the metaphysical realm?

• • •

Linus had a security blanket; Noah Levine had a metal-handled steak knife. When he was five years old, he secreted it in the dirt beneath the wooden steps of his house, a two-bedroom, redwood-paneled home in the Santa Cruz mountains ruled by what he describes as a drug-challenged mother and an "evil stepfather."

When Levine got anxious or desperate or enraged, he dug out the blade and contemplated its less-culinary applications. He developed two plans: he could skewer himself, punching the knife into his heart, or he could sneak up on his stepfather as he slept and kill him.

The stepfather eventually bailed, escaping with his life, but Levine's childhood didn't get any smoother. By the age of 10, he was destroying himself incrementally, getting bent on a regular basis with a friend. "It's kind of tough when you're 10 years old to score drugs, so we resorted to stealing what we could from our relatives and got into stuff like sniffing paint and engine cleaner," he writes in *Dharma Punx*. "Anything that would make us dizzy would do."

In 1980, at the age of 10, Levine heard a tape of the Sex

Pistols. He was sold immediately. It was the Reagan era, when it seemed the cold war would climax at any minute with an apocalyptic exchange of nukes, and Johnny Rotten's "no future" posturing and the band's atonal buzz-saw sonics spoke to the prepubescent shit-kicker. Levine says his attraction to punk was partially fueled by an awareness of "the glaring injustice in the world" and the "hopelessness" of the time. "But more honestly, I was more pissed at my own family situation—a broken home, a dysfunctional and addicted mom, an abusive step-dad."

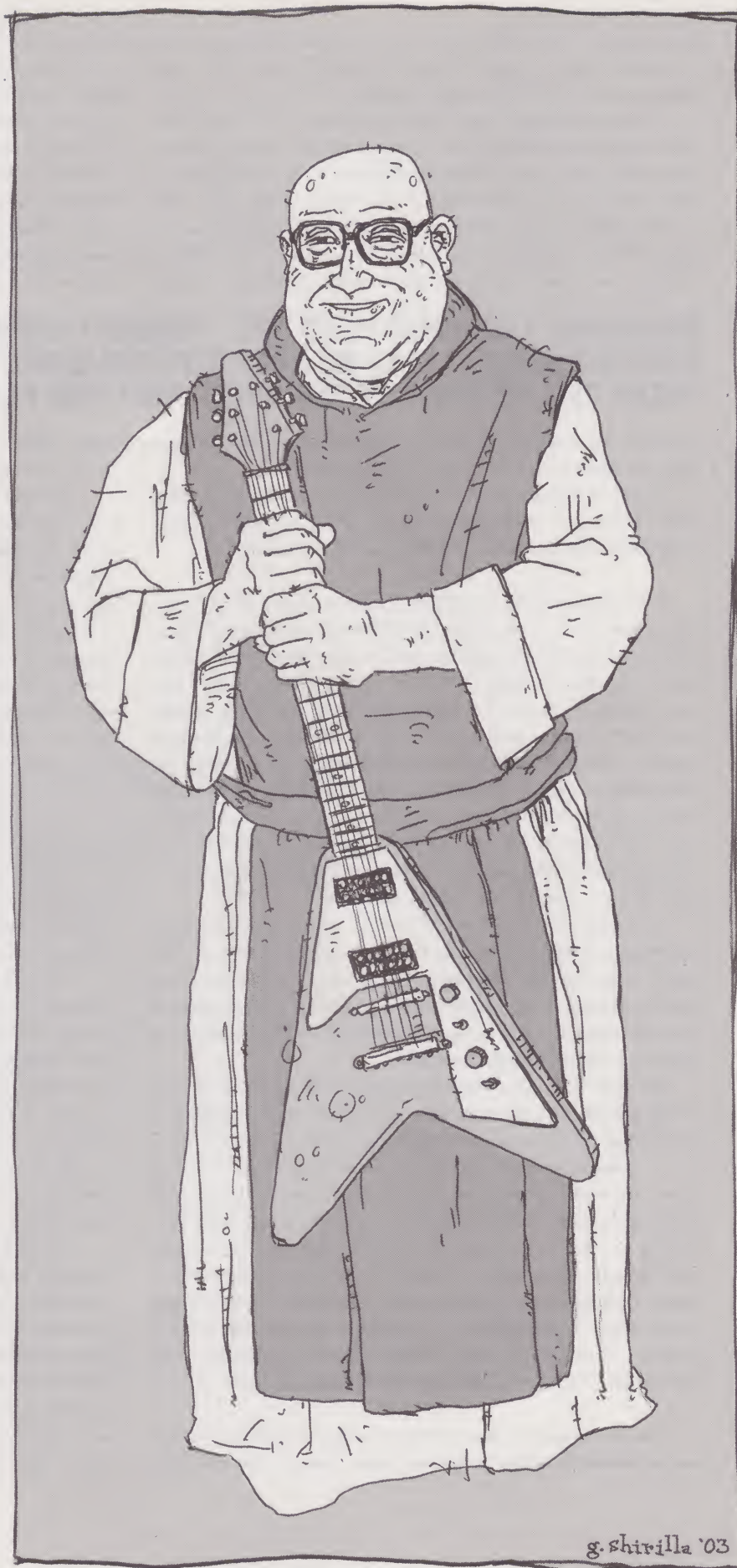
As a teenager, Levine spent his days skateboarding and his nights circle-pitting. He was the guy at the gigs—bands like Corrosion of Conformity, Millions of Dead Cops, and 7 Seconds—blitzed on Schaeffer's or jelloed on a couple tabs of acid, wearing a Magic-Marked Postal Service shirt, his hair dyed fire engine red and chopped into a Mohawk.

In 10th grade he got into slumming with a pack of homeless gutter punks—a crew that included a girl gang called the Hell Bitches, who reveled in leaving bloody fingernail marks on the boys they fucked, and a heroin addict who proudly sported a tattoo of a syringe. They spent most of their time getting wasted and smoking crack.

"I was in pain and I was angry, and drugs worked to numb that pain," Levine says. "In some ways, drugs propelled the anger, and I acted out violently under the influence. But in another way, drugs were a solution in the beginning. I found that I could drink, or smoke, or shoot dope, and it took the edge off the pain I was feeling."

The guards at the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall were well acquainted with Levine, who had a penchant for running afoul of the law. Over the span of a few years he was popped for weed possession (five times), strong-arm robbery (he nabbed an elderly lady's purse), attacking a jock with a skateboard (he bashed the guy in the cranium), and stealing a car stereo (he was too wasted to run away from the cops). One time while in custody he was so out of control the guards had to hog-tie him to keep him still.

As a teenage rebel, Levine rejected the advice of his pop, Stephen Levine, a best-selling Buddhist author who was remarried and dwelling in the granola town of Taos, New Mexico. His father was a product of the '60s



who palled around with New Age icons Ram Dass and Jack Kornfield. But Levine hated hippies and didn't want to have anything to do with anything remotely spiritual.

Lockdown changed that. After what he calls a "half-assed" suicide attempt that landed him in a padded cell (he'd tried to slit his wrists with a plastic comb before smashing his head on the jailhouse wall), Levine got a call from his dad. His father, Noah writes in his autobiography, "suggested that some simple meditation techniques might alleviate the pain I was feeling. He explained to me that by 'bringing the mind into the present moment, the present experi-

BRINGING THE MIND INTO THE PRESENT MOMENT, THE PRESENT EXPERIENCE OF BEING, I MAY BE ABLE TO FIND SOME FREEDOM IN THAT MOMENT FROM THE REGRET OF THE PAST AND THE FEAR OF THE FUTURE.

ence of being, I may be able to find some freedom in that moment from the regret of the past and the fear of the future.' "

Today this practice of letting go lies at the heart of Noah Levine's lessons. "The basis of what I'm trying to teach," he says, "is present-time awareness, mindfulness of the present."

• • •

Like Noah Levine, Siddhartha Gautama wasn't the cheeriest young man. Born to an affluent and powerful family in the Indian foothills of the Himalayas in the sixth century BCE, Gautama was haunted by dark thoughts. "When he looked at human life," religious historian Karen Armstrong writes in the book, *Buddha*, Gautama "could see only a grim cycle of suffering, which began with the trauma of birth and proceeded inexorably to 'aging, illness, death, sorrow and corruption.' He himself was no exception to this universal rule. At present he was young, healthy and handsome, but whenever he reflected on the suffering that laid ahead, all the joy and confidence of youth drained out of him. His luxurious lifestyle seemed meaningless and trivial."

At the age of 29, Gautama left his wife and child to wander the countryside in search of a spiritual antidote to human misery. This wasn't a particularly revolutionary act—there were swarms of *bhikkhus*—ascetic Hindu beggar-monks—roaming around India at the time. Gautama, according to Armstrong, "believed that he was setting out on an exciting adventure."

Six years later, after logging countless miles on the road, torturing himself through starvation and dehydration, engaging in extended silent yoga sessions, and doing a whole lot of introspection, Gautama, according to legend, achieved nirvana—liberation from the realm of suffering—while meditating under a tree. Adopting the title Buddha (enlightened one), he proceeded to verbally lay out the route to nirvana, the Noble Eightfold Path—essentially "The Buddha's Guide to Better Living." It includes prohibitions on telling lies and gossiping, a ban on violence, and according to late scholar Walpola Rahula, an instruction to train the mind to abandon "all sensations, even of happiness and unhappiness, of joy and sorrow," letting only "pure equanimity and awareness" remain.

• • •

Levine's tentative steps toward the spiritual life didn't lead to instant sainthood. After he was cut loose from an East Palo Alto

group-home ("a storage facility to keep kids like me off the streets") at 18, he knocked around Santa Cruz, toiling at a pizza place, scamming on girls, brawling, and breaking enough traffic laws to lose his driver's license and get his vintage Triumph motorcycle impounded. He also made the front page of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* when he was arrested on a slew of felony vandalism charges for graffiti and was facing more time in the clink, with prosecutors asking for a two-year prison sentence. Simultaneously, however, Levine was showing some signs of getting his shit together. He'd discovered the straight-edge scene and became a regular at 12-step recovery meetings. The

judge ended up sparing Levine prison time but hit him with \$10,000 in restitution and 500 hours of community service.

Depressed, he began exploring Eastern religious movements—a decision that was prompted by his experiences with 12-stepping, which encourages followers to surrender to a "higher power." Like everything in his life, Levine's spiritual road-trip was a study in extremes. For a while he fell under the spell of a guru who claimed to be an otherworldly incarnation of "pure love" but was eventually busted for child molestation. At 20 he took a two-year vow of celibacy. "That period of celibacy gave me the incredible experience of being with desire and not satisfying it," he told *Tricycle* magazine in 2000. "I was choosing for the cultivation of my own spiritual practice that I wasn't going to be sexual—no masturbation, no intercourse, complete restraint."

Still, Levine held on to his punk surliness. When he went on a retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh, the famed Vietnamese Buddhist, he found himself dissing the crowd. "My mind tended toward judging and resenting all of the rich, white Buddhists who were there with their brand new BMWs and designer clothes," he writes in *Dharma Punx*.

Later, embarking on a five-month pilgrimage to Asia, Levine planned to wrap himself in the robes of Buddhist monkdom. At one temple in Burma he was baffled to find the monks training cats to jump through hoops rather than meditating or studying scripture. At another, a monk who had a long-running grudge against Levine's dad gave him grief. After several aborted attempts at ordaining, he found he couldn't commit and returned to the states.

In the opinion of Vinny Ferraro, a close friend who accompanied him to Asia, "he was taking himself too fucking seriously. He was all suped-up on ordaining."

When the monk thing didn't work out, Levine moved to San Francisco and hooked up with people at the opposite end of the spectrum: convicts. He started working for the Mind Body Awareness Project, a small nonprofit that offers free—nonreligious—meditation classes for state prison inmates and juvenile offenders at Alameda County Juvenile Hall and the infamous San Quentin state penitentiary. It was a natural move for Levine: if he hadn't gotten clean, he probably would've wound up living in a cage, a fate that had befallen a good number of his comrades.

Levine, who is currently pursuing a master's in psychological counseling, also leads a therapy group for San Quentin inmates grappling with drug addiction and does one-on-one psychotherapy sessions.

Ferraro, who volunteers with Levine at the prison, says close contact with cons keeps Levine from slipping into a "soft-core, Marin County" state of mind. ("All that workshop language is too cosmic," he gripes.) In prison, Ferraro notes, "either the guy is gonna dig you, or he's gonna bust you in the mouth."

San Quentin inmate Jarvis Jay Masters explains the value of meditation from a prisoner's perspective. "Having a meditation practice helps me tremendously," says Masters, a convicted murderer who converted to Buddhism. When meditating, he says, "I don't feel like I am on death row or in the hellhole of the Adjustment Center [the solitary confinement unit], but in a very real way I'm connected to others."

Ron Johnson, the assistant director of Alameda County's juvenile lockup has praise for the Mind Body Awareness Project, which works with serious offenders, including teens accused of homicide. "It's an excellent program. Teaching children to control their emotions through meditation helps them to adjust to life in our facility," Johnson tells me, adding that it seems to cut down on the general aggression level.

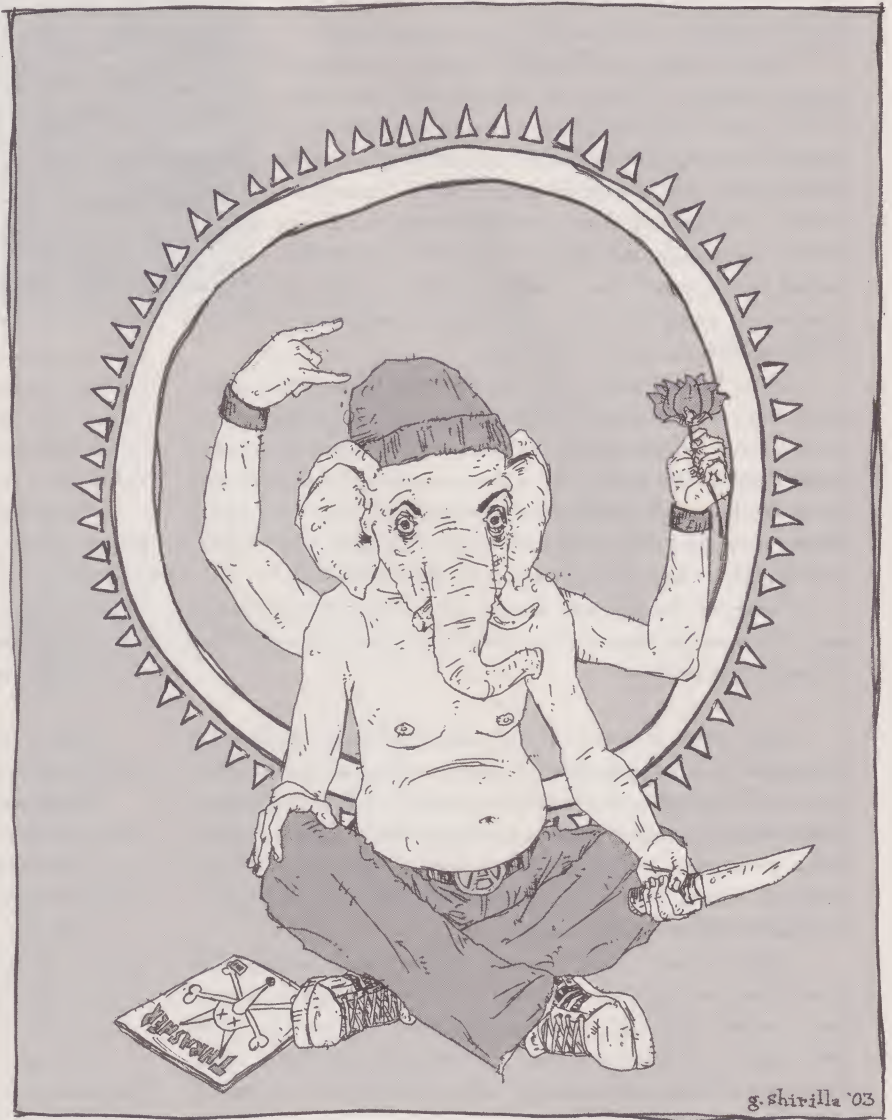
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Despite the avowed atheism of most punks, god and punk rock share a long history. You might trace it back to the Bad Brains, who in the early 1980s adopted Rastafarianism and phony Jamaican accents after seeing a Bob Marley gig. Around the same time, a member of Circle One, an early LA hardcore band, started what amounted to an evangelical Christian cult. Later during that same decade the Cro-Mags and Youth of Today were very publicly sucked into the world of the Hare Krishnas, prompting droves of hardcore kids to check out that eccentric variant of Hinduism. In the 1990s, Justin Marler of the sludge-metal outfit Sleep converted to Russian Orthodox Christianity and moved into a monastery; emo-heroes Sunny Day Real Estate disbanded for a time when the band's singer caught the Jesus bug; Jesse Michaels of Operation Ivy did a stint as Buddhist monk after the band imploded; and major label bubblegummers MXPX are self-proclaimed Bible thumpers. Needless to say, all of them caught hell for it.

But in the eyes of Craig O'Hara, punks haven't "put up enough resistance" to religious-types. Religion, says O'Hara, the author of *The Philosophy Of Punk: More Than Noise*, has "nothing to do with punk rock or hardcore or rebellion."

His criticism of Levine is pointed. "Punk rock is a youth culture, so it's always strange to see people grow up and go on to do something else—like being a Buddhist or being a stock broker—and incorporate that into punk rock. If I make a living as used car salesman I'm not going to put out a book saying, 'Being a used car salesman is the real punk thing.'"

However, on some level, punk and Buddhism are underpinned by a similar premise: both acknowledge that the planet is brimming with unhappiness. The question is how you confront that misery.



Punkers, by definition, buck the status quo. That could mean running amok, as Levine and company did, or it could mean trying to uproot the establishment by becoming a hacker or a zinester or a pirate radio DJ or a hardcore activist—like the hordes of punkers who paralyzed San Francisco when bombs started falling on Iraq, and the ones who shut down Seattle during the anti-World Trade Organization protests.

The Buddha's prescription appears to be a surefire way to keep people from challenging real-world inequity and evil; India during his day was marked by a gaping chasm between rich and poor, a situation worsened by the immutable caste system. So what did the wise one say? Yeah, the world is fucked up. It's always going to be that way.

Still, there's another take on Buddhism, one that's gaining increasing acceptance, especially among Western Buddhists. In the eyes of "engaged" Buddhists, the enlightened one wasn't an apologist for business as usual, but a veritable insurrectionist who'd exhort the faithful to actively respond to injustice if he were around today.

This incarnation of Buddhism appeals to some of Levine's students. "Why are the Dharma Punx attracted to this way of life?" asks one pupil, a woman who calls herself Bodhi. "For me, what the Buddha was teaching was really revolutionary. It's commonly referred to as 'against the stream;' it invites people to go a different way, to cultivate wisdom and compassion. Since I was a girl, I've been disturbed by the stupor I see around me. Most people are checked out, going along with traditions—the traditions of family, of their country, of whatever."

Levine himself seems torn on the issue of societal engagement. On one hand you'll find him at the anti-war demonstration, on the other he says he has no interest in affecting widespread social change. "My perspective is that the system is totally fucked. Always has been and probably always will be. And I don't think I can change it . . . I believe totally and completely in personal transformation. I don't have a lot of hope for systems to change."

Buddhism, he says, is a somewhat of an "exclusionary thing. I don't think everybody can get it. Only the wise are gonna get it, but I think punks are wise."

• • •

The "Urban Dharma" group taught by Levine meets every Wednesday in a well-maintained brick building across the street from Golden Gate Park. It's an April night, and Levine sits cross-legged before a group of perhaps 40 people, most of them outsider types: burly dudes with neck tattoos, women with tricolored hair and spiky clothes. Next to Levine sits a white plastic statue of a skinny Buddha adorned with a mohawk.

Topic A is *annica*, the elementary concept that everything in life is transitory and fleeting. "Nothing is solid. Nothing is unchanging. Nothing externally, nothing internally," Levine says. "You can't hold on to pleasure, and you can't get away from pain." Personal suffering is generated by "trying to hold on to something you can't hold on to."

Levine's lecture moves on to the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha, he tells the group, counseled "avoiding that which is unwholesome" by restraining ourselves "from activities that are unwholesome, activities such as violence, such as greed, such as hatred." The prohibition on bad behavior extends to the mental realm—just thinking about kicking someone's ass is verboten. "It's pretty hard to avoid unwholesome feelings and thoughts, maybe even impossible, I think. I haven't been able to get there, that's for

sure," Levine relates, giggling; the room erupts in laughter.

This sort of casual explication of the dharma has had a gargantuan impact on people like Mike Haber. Haber, who skateboards to our interview in a ripped denim vest and a black Hunns T-shirt, was virulently antireligious as a younger punk. The oxish character was also the wrong guy to fuck with and once bit off part of a dude's ear during a fight. These days you can find a remark-

"MY PERSPECTIVE IS THAT THE SYSTEM IS TOTALLY FUCKED. ALWAYS HAS BEEN AND PROBABLY ALWAYS WILL BE. AND I DON'T THINK I CAN CHANGE IT . . . I BELIEVE TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY IN PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION. I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF HOPE FOR SYSTEMS TO CHANGE." BUDDHISM, LEVINE SAYS, IS A SOMEWHAT OF AN "EXCLUSIONARY THING. I DON'T THINK EVERYBODY CAN GET IT. ONLY THE WISE ARE GONNA GET IT, BUT I THINK PUNKS ARE WISE."

ably tranquil Haber meditating daily and volunteering at the Zen Hospice Project, a San Francisco nonprofit that cares for the terminally ill. Last week Haber spent 48 hours at the bedside of a man in the final throes of brain cancer. He intends to move to Thailand to become a monk.

"Noah's been a really good teacher for me because he's not perfect and he doesn't claim to be," Haber tells me. Eric Rodriguez geysered the first time he meditated with Levine. It was a session aimed at generating feelings of forgiveness. Rodriguez says, "I started thinking about my dad and just broke down crying. I hadn't cried for years."

• • •

One of Levine's friends says he is "so charismatic and real that people look into his eyes and fall in love with him."

Riding shotgun in Levine's thunderous deep red Impala, I ask if he's worried about becoming a guru, about getting weird and creepy and somehow exploiting the people who show up to hear him talk dharma. No, he says without a lot of elaboration.

I ask him about his material life—the full-sleeve tattoos, the slick car, the gold teeth. Aren't serious Buddhists supposed to live simply and renounce worldly possessions? "I don't care about any of this stuff," he says. "It's not important to me."

Later we come back to the guru subject. With his autobiography hitting store shelves and a major book tour about to jump off, Levine is poised to become a media darling. Salon.com has already run a lengthy feature, and NPR called today. "When I get attention, I have this ego that really likes it," he admits, quickly pointing out that "it's not about Noah. It's about the dharma."

"I'm working on maintaining humility in this life of mine that seems to be going more and more public." ©

Journalist AC Thompson lives in San Francisco. A version of this story also appeared in the San Francisco Bay Guardian.

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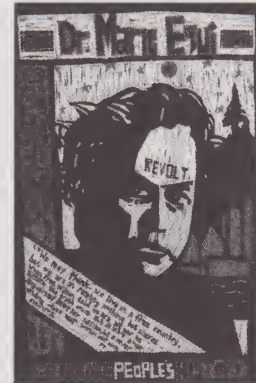
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BRINGING PEOPLE'S

CHICAGO ARTIST JOSH MACPHEE'S INNOVATIVE STREET -



A typical American History textbook doesn't teach about the Stonewall gay rights uprising; Maria Equi, a World War I era feminist, anarchist and war resistor; or Jane, the DIY Chicago underground network that provided safe abortions to women before *Roe v. Wade*. You might learn a little about slavery abolitionist John Brown and the Harper's Ferry rebellion, "but if you do it's in a really skewed way," says Chicago artist and activist Josh MacPhee.

MacPhee set out to change that, with a grassroots education called The Celebrate People's History Project. MacPhee started out five years ago with a one-off block printed poster of Malcolm X and has since developed the project into a large-scale initiative that has involved about 30,000 posters which have made their way into classrooms, train stations and city streets across the country.

"When I was putting the Malcolm X one up, I got an overwhelmingly positive response," explains MacPhee, who also runs a small business called JustSeeds selling his radical stencil, postcard and T-shirt art. "People wanted to help me put them up, they'd want to take them home. They were like, 'Malcolm's my boy.' When people see something that's actually remotely related to their lives, they get excited about it."

While the Malcolm X poster was originally meant as a one-time thing to celebrate the Black radical's birthday, the response it

generated showed MacPhee that he was onto something.

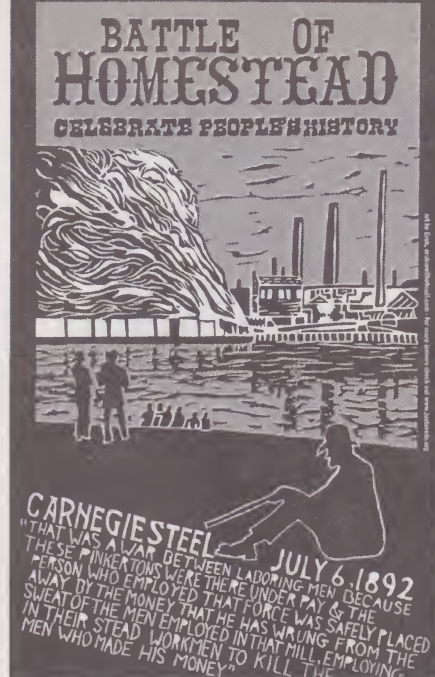
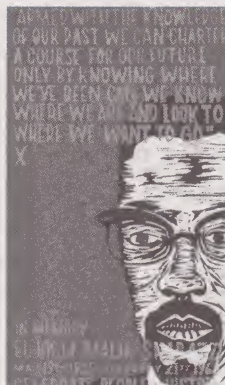
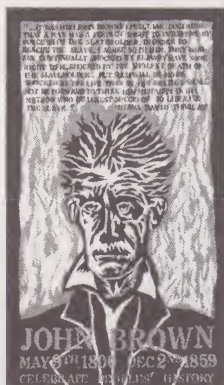
"We're inundated with visual culture, but usually it's trying to get us to buy something, like a Coke or going to a crappy movie, or to do something specific, like go see a band," he says. "The idea was to put something up on the streets that's purely inspirational and informative—and for a general audience."

To follow up his Malcolm X poster, MacPhee did a poster of anti-slave radical John Brown, illustrated with a quote from Henry David Thoreau.

"In school you hear about Thoreau as this do-gooder liberal," he said. "You don't read that he wrote this book about John Brown literally justifying any means necessary to end slavery. You don't read that book, you read *Walden Pond*."

After the first two posters MacPhee got other artists to start contributing their own visions of events and figures in what is commonly referred to as "people's history": history written from the perspective of the working class, the third world, and otherwise historically discriminated against, and—when it comes to the writing of history—ignored persons.

"It originally was all American history," MacPhee explains, "but now it doesn't make political sense to separate the US from the rest of the world. I like the idea of trying to break down our ignorance about the rest of the world."



HISTORY

POSTERS ARE TURNING HEADS AND TEACHING LESSONS TO THE STREETS

By Kari Lydersen

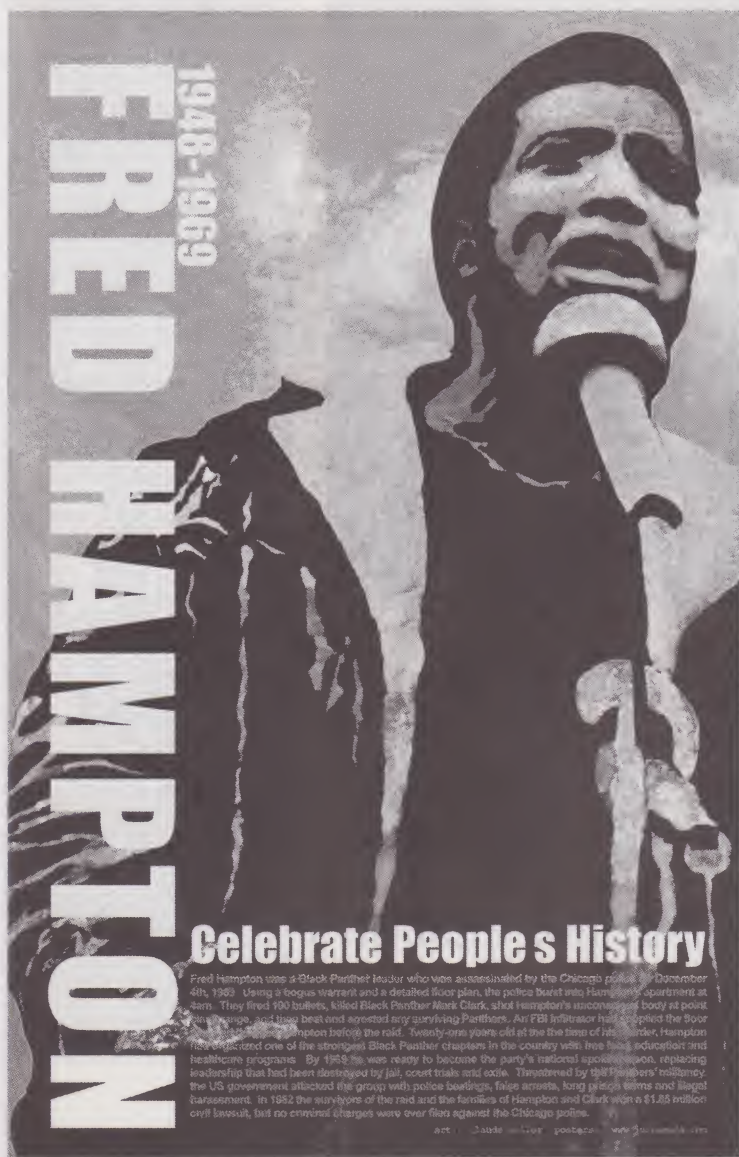
As a result, more recent entries in the series—now 16 posters strong—have added more global activists to the roster.

Nashville artist Shaun Slifer, 23, chose Elisee Reclus, a French anarchist geologist, for the subject of his piece after finding out about the 19th Century radical by chance.

"I discovered in his work some of the most romantic writing about environmental systems and man's impact on them," Slifer remembers. "I was likewise impressed by his radical viewpoints and unwavering stance in the international science community. Here is someone who published what was considered at the time to be one of the most important geological volumes yet written, and yet he was still routinely persecuted for being a radical. I was also impressed that many of his observations—especially on land use and the development of cities—were directly applicable to current scenarios."

Ally Reeves, who did the hand-drawn and -lettered green and black Wangari Maathai poster, likewise wanted to share her new





found knowledge about an inspirational figure that few Americans know anything about.

"I knew I wanted to do a poster of a woman and I hoped to find a woman who had made an impact on environmental conservation," says Reeves, who also lives in Nashville. "When I discovered Wangari Maathai I stopped dead in my tracks. I read through a brief bio about her, smiling the whole way through. She had an economically sustainable and environmentally beneficial program, and she is alive and [her ideas are] still spreading around the world—it's still happening!"

MacPhee has wheat-pasted the posters extensively during trips to San Francisco, Nashville and other cities, while volunteers have also posted them in Detroit, Portland, Santa Cruz, Bloomington, Ann Arbor and some other locations. While he sells the posters for a modest sum on his website, MacPhee says he also sends posters for free to anyone who promises to post them, and only asks that people send back photos of the work.

"Posters are hard to distribute," MacPhee says. "It's not like CDs, zines and T-shirts where there are underground distribution networks in place. Posters are this weird anomaly that distributors don't want to deal with—you can only sell them for a small amount of money, and you have to mail them in a tube."

Regardless of the difficulty getting them out there, the posters have made an impact, not only on the streets, but in some classrooms as well. "Teachers use them in their lessons," MacPhee says, "and I've had middle school students write to me in that bubbly cursive handwriting asking for them, because they're doing projects on the people."

While MacPhee pays for much of the project out of his own pocket, and still finds it difficult to get the artists to finish their posters—"the majority of the time I have to literally *pull* the art out of people," he says—the posters have begun to create a radical community unto themselves, says artist Slifer.

"I think the project has begun to draw together a loose network of artists interested in the same goals, which is invaluable," he says. "With street art you don't often find something with a whole lot of substance to it. It's too easy for someone to pick up an Xacto knife, make a stencil of a skull or a gun or some '50s pop imagery and saturate their neighborhood with it. Many people never get past the *Obey* bandwagon, where you do something you personally get off on and explain it by saying there isn't any explanation. There's enough of that already. This is a grassroots art and education project."

While it is always hard to get feedback on public art projects, word on the street has been positive. "I'll run into people in all different contexts who have seen them," MacPhee says. "I'll be tabling and someone will come up and say, 'Oh I saw these on the dumpster outside my building—they were all over it.' It makes you realize the stuff you put up *does* get seen. Since street art is anonymous by nature, you don't always know that. But the longer I do this the more I run into people who have seen it."

For MacPhee, part of the success of the project has been that it takes the form of posters. "I've always been attracted to the poster as a communication and art form," he says. "People hold on to posters forever. It's like printmaking for the people. They're infinitely reproducible, cheap and easy to make and get out into the world."

Once it's out in the world, MacPhee wants the posters to tell stories that show victory instead of defeat. "A lot of times the radical history we do learn is a history of defeat," he said. "People want to do images of martyrs or battles we lost, like a strike where everyone was killed. I try to get artists to change that view and show things where we actually won."

The quote on the original Malcolm X posters states that, "Armed with the knowledge of our past we can charter a course for our future. Only by knowing where we've been can we know where we are and look to where we want to go." MacPhee says this sums up the project perfectly. "Until we know our history we can't move on to the type of future we want to create," he says. ©

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CELEBRATE PEOPLES HISTORY

General Sandino's six year struggle in the Nicaraguan mountains leading a handful of campesinos and laborers, must be viewed as the result of centuries of foreign domination of the country and of the repeated surrender by the ruling groups to those same foreign powers. Those men who fought bitterly with their machetes and antiquated rifles, who made bombs from empty tin cans filled with rocks and scrap iron, who brought down enemy planes practically with stones, who always maintained high morale in the face of an enemy a hundred times more powerful—they demonstrated something that until the appearance of that popular army had been concealed in the difficult terrain of Latin American history: the hopeful prospect that campesinos, with their own leaders, with tactics forged in the course of the fight, and doctrines arising from the process itself, could organize a successful struggle for national autonomy.

Sergio Ramirez

Augusto César Sandino 1895-1934

celebrate people's HISTORY

UNTIL WE KNOW OUR HISTORY WE CAN'T MOVE ON TO THE TYPE OF FUTURE WE WANT TO CREATE

PAUL ROBESON

(1898-1963) American athlete, singer, actor and political activist. Performed and spoke out against racism and in support of labor and peace. Fought for an antilynching law. The U.S. revoked his passport. To circumvent this travel restriction he performed two concerts on the U.S.-Canadian border. Fought for an antilynching law. "The only man since I fought for freedom of the Negro, I made my choice. I had no alternative."

PEOPLES

Sylvia Ray Rivera

CELEBRATE PEOPLES HISTORY

STONEWALL 1969

EMMA GOLDMAN 1869 - 1940

CELEBRATE PEOPLES HISTORY

Morning breaks to the sound of grinding corn, screeching roosters, and sharpening machetes in the Boca Costa region of north-west Guatemala. The warm light of the rising sun spreads across the peaked volcanoes, the flat tin roofs, and the humid, verdant *cafetales* in the country's coffee growing zone. The entire region awakens to begin the day's work—growing coffee for export to the cups and cafes of the wealthy countries to the north.

Despite its calm beauty, this is a region in trouble. Coffee prices are so low in Guatemala that they no longer cover the cost of production, causing small growers to lay off up to 75 percent of their pickers in January 2002. This in turn has led to massive upheaval for the traditionally migrant and indigenous laborers, and has led to widespread land invasions in the country by landless workers. USAID states that dramatic drops in coffee prices in Guatemala have led to widespread acute child malnutrition due to drought and a drastic drop in employment in the coffee sector. Their most recent census shows that 30,000 children in 91 municipalities suffer acute malnutrition, and that 45 percent of children under five are stunted by chronic malnutrition. This problem is more severe in Guatemala than it is anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere.

The crisis has shown no signs of abating. Without massive intervention, prices are projected to fall another 25 percent this year. Coffee workers and small growers can expect more upheavals, even less pay, and less hope of relief. Each day is a struggle to keep them-

selves and their families from sliding any further into poverty and misery.

But in one community, in the department of Quetzaltenango, municipality of Colomba, the day progresses a little differently than it will for thousands of other *campesinos*, and there is a little more hope. The men and some of the women of the community meet at the *casa grande* around six a.m. They talk, joke, and catch up a bit. They listen to the elected administrator assign the days responsibilities according to the collectively decided *Plan de Trabajo*, or work plan. They go back to their own houses for a quick breakfast, then head out into the *cafetal*, to tend their coffee—organically grown, fair-trade certified coffee. If the painstaking measures they will take to ensure the health and quality of their coffee succeed and if they can find an importer to purchase it, through their commitment they may be able to find a way out of the cycle of poverty that traps the vast majority of Guatemalan *campesinos*.

The community is Santa Anita la Union, a small *finca*, or coffee plantation, in Guatemala, Central America's most populous nation. A product of the 1996 Peace Accords, which ended the decades-long civil war that claimed the lives of more than 250,000 Guatemalans, it is a farm collectively owned and operated by 33 ex-URNG guerilla combatants and their families. On their land they grow bananas, raise chickens and coronices (a small flightless bird raised for their eggs), but mostly they grow coffee. Fair-trade certified, organic, shade grown, high altitude coffee. A community of people united by the trauma of their shared past, they have come together to continue their struggle for justice, rights, the future of their families, and the opportunity to control the resources of their own lands.

After 500 years of domination, the Maya of Santa Anita la Union are still struggling—but without guns, without a life of clandestine anonymity, without the constant threat of the murderous Guatemalan Army. For them the war is over and they now struggle in peace, with the power of their own hands and the power of the ideals that led so many of them into the mountains to join the revolutionary movement many years ago. "This is our vision," says Fernando, one of the farmers who looks at me with his eye that wasn't damaged by a land mine. "Farming organically, working collectively. We want to create a center of concentration, to help other groups like this. It is for this that we are here, working together."©

A CUP OF HOPE

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SNAPSHOTS FROM A GUATEMALAN COFFEE CO-OPERATIVE:

A PHOTO ESSAY BY VICTOR BLUE



2

3



2. Teresa, picking coffee with her child.

3. Playing jump rope at recess.

4



5



4. Ricky refuses to go to school.

5. In the bakery.

6. Choy, sorting coffee beans for quality.

6



7



8



7. The funeral of Chano.

8. Marconi and Pepe light candles at the wake.

9. Cafetales cover the Boca Costa region.

9



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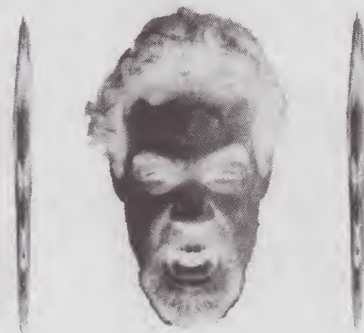
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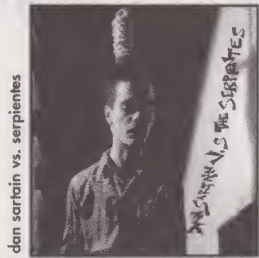
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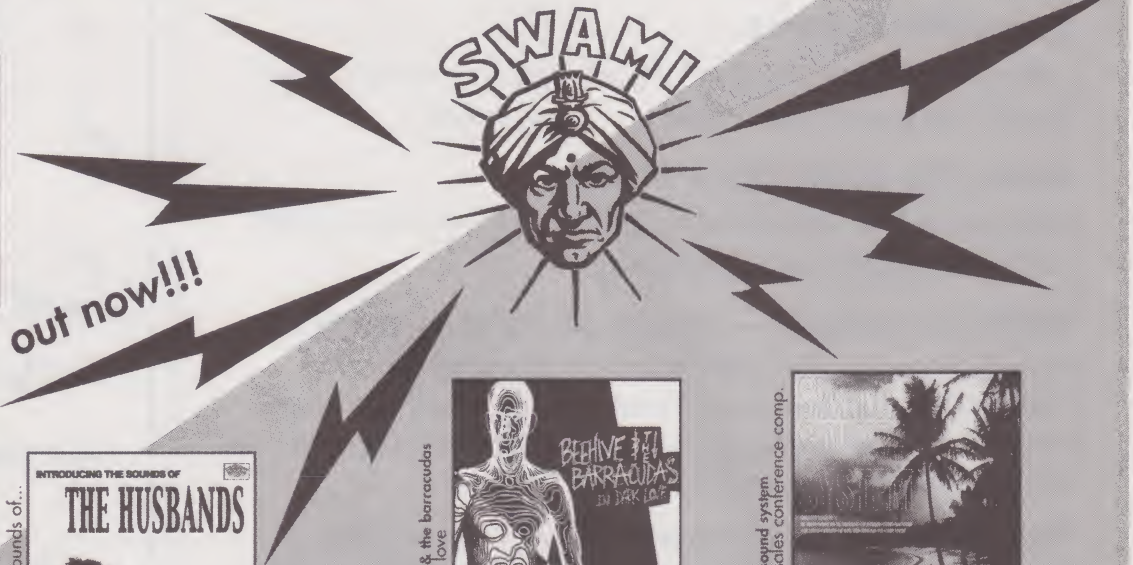
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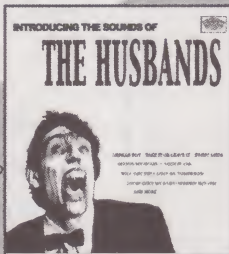
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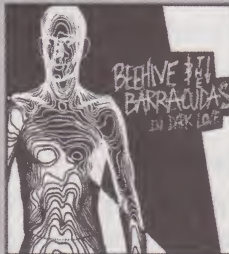
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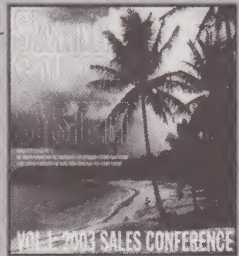
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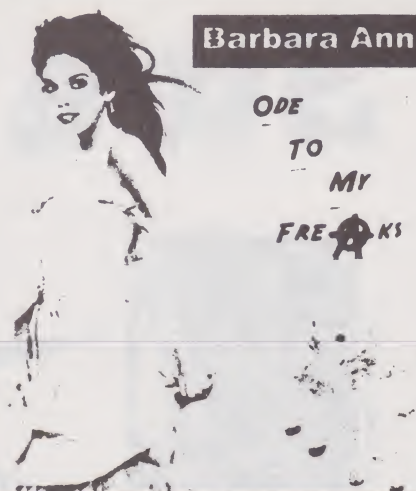
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How I Became a Punk, Part One

The first time I got called a punk was in 1956. I was eight years old. I had a mohawk.

It was a craze that year because

of some movie, the way coonskin caps were another year, but I was the only one in my neighborhood whose dad would let him get one.

He did it himself. He always cut my hair because he couldn't see spending 50 cents to let the barber do it, and he always cut it the same way: a buzz cut. No matter how much I complained, no matter how I pointed to the big kids and their pompadours and ducktails, it was always the buzz cut. "It's clean and it's simple," he'd say, as if those were supposed to be virtues an eight-year-old aspired to.

But just this once, he listened to my pleas and gave me a modified mohawk. He wouldn't shave the sides all the way, and the middle bit wasn't even an inch long. "You don't want to be too extreme," he cautioned, "you'll only regret it once it's too late."

I argued that it was a pretty weak mohawk, but secretly I was pleased. For once, maybe for the first time ever, I was well and truly different. People looked at me when I walked down the street. And, I was convinced, they secretly envied me.

Being different was important to me. Vital, actually. I'd felt that way as long as I could remember, which was back to when I was three years old. You don't usually think of three-year-olds as having a bad attitude, but I did.

The first time I became conscious of it, well, it couldn't have been later than 1950 or '51, because we were still living in Pontiac. My dad took me to the playground at Central High, a block away. We were living in the house where my dad had grown up; Central was where he'd attended school in the 1920s.

I was on the swings when I heard thunder in the distance. I was terrified of thunderstorms.

"Come on daddy, it's going to storm, let's go home," I pleaded. "Don't worry, there's plenty of time before it gets here. It might even blow over."

It didn't look like it was going to blow over to me, but he was my dad and I was three years old. It was just possible that he might know more about it than me.

The storm got closer. It was dark enough that cars were turning on their headlights. It wasn't just thunder anymore; I could see lightning now, lots of it. I was almost crying. Still my dad dawdled, kept trying to get me back up on the swing so he could push me some more.

A bolt of lightning hit nearby followed by a deafening crash. Dad finally relented.

"Maybe we'd better get started home."

I practically jumped into his arms. I wanted him to carry me, but because I'd insisted on bringing my tricycle, Dad told me I needed to ride it home. The rain arrived as we were crossing Huron Street and immediately turned into a downpour. I was screaming out loud with frustration and rage, and my dad kept saying, "Come on, hurry up, we're almost there."

By now I was completely soaked, so I didn't see any point in hurrying, except for the possibility of getting knocked off my tricycle by lightning. And how much worse could that be, I wondered.

But the other thing that kept going through my mind was that even I, a little kid, had known that a storm was coming and that it was time to go home. How come my dad, who was supposed to be a genius (to hear him tell it, anyway), hadn't been able to figure out what had been obvious to me?

The answer leapt into my brain with frightening certainty: "My dad's an asshole." Well, not in those exact words, because I hadn't learned swear words yet. But in the three-year-old equivalent.

It would be years before I realized that getting us caught in a thunderstorm didn't necessarily mean my dad was retarded. It was more likely his idea of fun. He liked complications and problems. He lived for them. They reinforced his view that the whole world was a complication and a problem.

But there I was, three years old and already losing faith in

human nature. If the adults who were supposed to be taking care of me didn't know what they were doing, it must be me against the world. And from where I stood, the world was winning.

I was a dour child, deadly serious. I have few memories of laughing or playing. The times I was happiest was when I was absorbed in a problem—like father, like son, I guess—and if I did laugh, it was usually at someone else's expense. I didn't trust anyone, and was convinced everyone was out to get me. I became obsessed with my image and how others saw me. If I could control that, perhaps I'd be safe.

So that's how I came to be trundling down the street in my newly mown mohawk, in June of 1956, just as the full blast furnace-cum-steam bath effect of a Michigan summer was kicking in. My little brother was by my side, and I was almost strutting.

There might not have been many people who admired or looked up to me, but there was always my brother. He'd follow me around, gazing at me with sheepdog eyes, willing to do anything I'd ask, prepared to take any sort of abuse for the sake of being near me.

I knew that I was a skinny, cowardly weakling, that I'd lost every fight I'd been in, but to my brother I was the next best thing to Superman. I'd brag to him about how tough I was, about all the people I could beat up with one hand tied behind my back. Lies, all of it, and he believed every word.

I was in the middle of some preposterous tale starring myself as hero when I saw another boy coming toward us. He was about my age, maybe a year younger, not quite as big as me. Maybe he overheard me bragging, maybe he just didn't like my looks, but at some point it began to register in my brain that he and I were on a collision course.

His lip curled as we came face to face. He sure as hell wasn't getting out of the way for me. It was like one of those cowboy showdowns I'd seen in the movies, and I knew the secret was to show no fear. Besides, even if my brother was way smaller than me, there were two of us and only one of him. He didn't stand a chance.

Or so I thought. Almost effortlessly he pushed me off the sidewalk and into the gutter. He gave me a look of casual contempt, as though I were a dead bug he'd just scraped off his shoe.

"Punk," he said, and walked on.

Desperate to regain some kind of face, I yelled, "Slob!" as he walked away, realizing as the word left my lips that it was wholly inadequate. Then came the worst part: having to face my brother. He had the same look on his face that I'd had when my dad got us caught in the thunderstorm. My big brother is an asshole.

I made my brother pay for that, and the poor kid continued to pay till the time I left home. My worst memory of the way I tormented him is from a year later, when I was nine and he was five.

For some reason he was a very happy child, as serene and cheerful as I was sullen and miserable. He'd walk around whistling or singing or telling himself little stories. It drove me nuts.

I wasn't one of those unhappy people who wanted to go off and sulk by himself. I wanted everyone sulking with me. By now I had become completely alienated from school, family and society. The breaking point came at the end of third grade when—in my opinion—I'd been cheated out of winning the class spelling bee and the prize had been given to my archenemy James Rice.

Now James Rice was a perfectly nice kid, bright, popular, friendly, hard-working, more than enough reason to hate him already. His family had more money than ours, was more important at church, and James excelled at sports while I was a public embarrassment. It was for all those reasons, I was convinced, that he'd been given the prize instead of me.

So that was it for me and school. The whole business was corrupt, I decided, so what was the point of trying? Up till then I'd been a good student, but by the time I hit fourth grade, my Harvard career was over, and, at least according to some adults, reform school beckoned.

I started getting in trouble for petty vandalism or arguing with the teacher. I was reading about the Roman Empire, and decided that I was on the side of the barbarians. It was obvious that America was the new Rome, and it was equally obvious that it needed some new barbarians to destroy it. And I was going to lead them.

I came home from school thinking dark thoughts and wondering where I could get my hands on some heavy weaponry. My brother wandered into the room singing his new favorite song,

which went something like, "La la la la LA, la la LA la la, la LA la LA la, LA LA LA LA la." I suppose that's creative enough for a five-year-old, but it drove me completely mad.

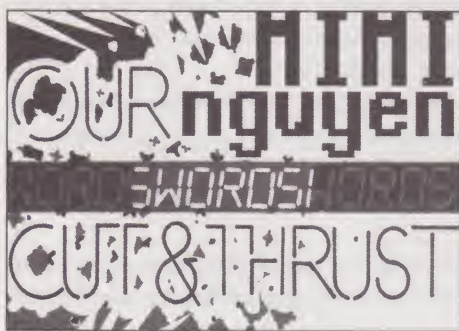
It wasn't just the pointless string of la-la-las, though that was bad enough. What killed me was the look of complete and utter bliss on his face. The world was a beautiful place, it said, and the outrageousness of that idea pushed me over the edge.

I'll show you what the world is really like, I thought, and, creeping up behind him, slugged him as hard as I could in the middle of his back. I knew I had connected well, both from the satisfying thump of my fist as it landed, and from his sudden, gasping outflow of breath. He started sobbing, of course, but before the first sounds of crying there was a frightening, pregnant pause as he turned to see what had happened.

I wish I could, but I don't think I'll ever be able to forget his expression. It was a combination of pain, disappointment, shock and terror. I'd shattered his innocence and happiness and dragged him into my own private hell. Any remaining trust and admiration he might have had for me were gone. I was now the enemy.

And I continued to be, not because I particularly disliked him, but because someone had to suffer for my sins, and I was determined it shouldn't be me. I rationalized that I was doing him a favor by teaching him that the world was a harsh, unpleasant place. Sometimes I'd feel a few pangs of guilt and try to stop picking on him, but then someone or something would kick my ass, and he'd end up paying for it. Years later, when we were both grown up, he would tell me, "The whole time I was trying to figure out why you hated me so much."

I told him that I hadn't really hated him, that if I'd hated anyone, it was myself. But that wouldn't be completely true, either, because as bad, useless, and hopeless as I thought I was, I was still, for some bizarre reason, convinced that I was better than everyone else. Unfortunately, I seemed to be the only one able to see this, which just went to show how the whole world was out to get me. And just like my little brother, the world was going to pay.



In a series of blurred, multiple-exposure photographs, New York City filmmaker James Spooner (with photographer

Pauline St. Denis and stylist Christine Baker) recreates iconoclastic punk rock images but replaces their white subjects with black punk rockers from his documentary film *Afro-Punk: The "Rock and Roll Nigger" Experience*. The resulting photographs are not faithful reproductions, and the substitution of black bodies is not a mere cor-

rective or additive. Instead, the fascination lies elsewhere, in the haunting dissonance of seeing these familiar images made unfamiliar. Does the image of a black man, rather than the Clash's Joe Strummer, caught in the act of smashing his guitar, forcefully change the meaning of his rage? If it is a black woman and not a youthful Ian McKaye who holds his head in weariness? Does the hooded figure in the white face paint evoke the skeletal logo of the Misfits, but also black filmmaker John Singleton's *Dead Presidents*? And the bare-chested black woman, slouching in a white tuxedo jacket, open beer bottle in one hand? Yeah, she belongs to a different world.

The photographs are all cases of mistaken identity. Threatening to unravel the abstractions of punk rock, these photographs call into question the socially coded nature of punk rock's histories, identities, icons, values, and meanings. Sid Vicious' sickly pallor and his appetite for self-destruction written in the track marks and the razor cuts criss-crossing his wasted body are part of what cemented this image in punk's historical archive. But what often passes in punk (and other avant-gardes, other modernisms) for a romance with danger when a British white boy plays the addict is not available to the black woman in America. The staged photograph of a black female "as" Sid Vicious then is part of a strategy that reveals visual images—like this and the other iconoclastic punk images—to be part of a complex of representations that produce "punk rock" as a contingent identity. That is, these photographs offer a privileged opportunity to examine the subterranean politics of the "original," including the historical racial hegemony of punk rock.

Afro-punk is James Spooner's 70-minute documentary about blackness and punk rock and, like the photographs he staged for a magazine spread, the film approaches the troubled relationship of race and punk rock with a critical eye for its possibilities and its problematics. Scores of interviews with black punks, filmed over the course of several cross-country road trips, are intercut with photographs and footage of live performances and set to a soundtrack of punk rock. Beginning with a series of origin stories, the kids in the picture (ranging in actual age from teenage to mid-life) tell remarkably similar narratives about their initial forays into punk rock. Many were the only black children growing up in white neighborhoods, and punk—with its contrary aesthetic and attitude—seemed to fit their psychological and corporeal alienation. It answered a need for expression and individuality, for a political framework and social community, and we hear, at least once, "[Punk] saved my life."

But these stories become more complicated and convoluted in the clash of contradictions and underlying tensions involved in turning to a subculture marked by white (boy) hegemony for "community" and other relationships. The feeling of having to prove oneself worthy, to be more punk than the white kids, is echoed here as Spooner's interviewees count on one hand the number of black punks in their local scenes (sometimes all is required is a thumb).

What emerges is a sometimes contradictory, but always complicated, patchwork of emotions—self-loathing, sadness, frustration, anger, resentment, loneliness and conviction. A poignant sequence relating a familiar dilemma for black punk rockers—what to do with hair that does not spike naturally—leaves a deep impression and a series of difficult questions about the racial politics of punk rock aesthetics.

Culled from his interviews, Spooner chose four individuals (all of whom are involved in either performing or promoting) to provide focus in some of the more personal segments and highlight the differences in their responses: Brooklyn's fierce Tamar Kali, easygoing Matt Davis from Iowa City, Long Island's dedicated black revolutionary Moe Mitchell, and quiet Southern Californian Mariko Jones. They represent a range of reactions and approaches to the question of integrating—or not—racial identity with their chosen subcultural affiliation.

Biracial Mariko Jones insists she is glad her friends tell her, "You don't act like a black person, you don't act like an Asian person. You're just Mariko." Because no one has ever called her "nigger" or barred her from a show, she doesn't seem to believe that race or racism has an impact on her interactions in punk, and says, a bit reproachfully, "I feel like the ones complaining are the ones who aren't doing anything." But her sentiments are contradicted in a series of cuts to interviews that powerfully (in both quality and quantity) argue otherwise. A young woman outside a club notes, "A lot of white people put black people in categories, like the safe black person." Laughing, she continues, "A lot of people mistake me for that safe black person." As one subject notes, while punk rock answered for a part of his alienation, it highlighted another aspect: being black in a white-dominated scene. The interviewees testify to the range of racisms reinforcing punk rock's silence about race. Many mentioned former friends who believed that every other black person except him or her qualified as a "nigger." With palpable disgust, another targets the color-blindness of righteous punk rockers, "anarchists [who tell me] their politics transcend race and gender." And Chicagoan Rachel sums up this frustration with punk rock's racial politics: "People are not trying to have a dialogue with you, but they do want to tokenize you. People want a multicultural vision of punk rock, and they want to showcase you, 'Look at all the Negros!' But at the same time they don't want to deal with you as a person who experiences race."

In perhaps the film's most pointed scene, Mitchell's band Cipher performs punk rock black power for a cramped room full of white boys. Members of the audience wind-mill, floor-punch, and grab the microphone away from Mitchell to scream incoherently. Spooner draws out the footage of this performance to underscore a swelling sense of discomfort and the hardcore dissonance embedded in its multiple contradictions—Mitchell's lyrics about the historical rape, pillage and enslavement of African peoples by Europeans and Americans, drowned out by the shouts of

slamming white punk rockers. (This was the most painful scene for me for other reasons too. Watching these boys "dance" was like watching a primitive tooth extraction or root canal. Give me head-nodding over this machismo.) Interviewed outside the club, a series of white boys admit they don't know what the lyrics were about—slavery, maybe? One offers the vague answer, "I guess they're about their beliefs," but pronounces "their" as if referring to an alien race of beings.

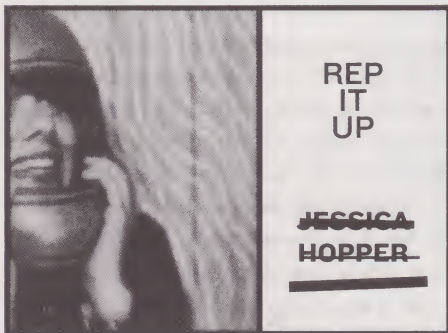
But the film is not only critical of white punks' negligence or unacknowledged privilege. Accused of "trying to be white," the interviewees maintain that much of the animosity and alienation—made worse because of a higher degree of investment both emotional and historical—has come from their families and black peers. There are plenty of stories here about being stuffed into garbage cans, being jumped for wearing punk gear, being spat upon and generally despised by other black kids in high school. And in another of the more powerful sequences here, the interviewees discuss their complicated responses to seeing other black punks at shows or on the streets. Laughing, some of them report feelings that the other black person is "trespassing" on their territory: "I'm supposed to be the only black person here!" Others debate the desire to speak to every other black person at a show *because of the isolation*. And one woman, sitting outside a club in a puff-sleeved shirt, gestures ruefully as she explains her dilemma—excitement at seeing another black person or person of color in the same venue, and a weird shame for being "discovered" in a scene that excitement at such a surprising appearance would be possible. But it is the film's willingness to embrace such contradictions and complexity in mapping the trials and tribulations of being black and being punk (along with the pleasures and the joys) that leaves an imprint, long after the credits have rolled.

Two years in the making, Spooner is clear about his priorities—first and foremost, this is a film about black subculture for black people. Having once sported a mohawk himself, he says, "I wanted to make the movie that I wished I had as a kid." (At the bottom of his list of priorities is reiterating to white punk rock audiences the critical nature of race and racism in everyday life, and the privileges they maintain even as punks.) The film has garnered some mainstream black press and so far the warm reception has been rewarding. For Spooner, this success confirms the importance of this attempt to make black punk rockers intelligible to black audiences who, as the interviewees relate, might have once scorned these outsiders as "white wannabes," "devil worshippers," or "fags." "The thing that keeps me going," he relates, "is what happens when I go out to promote the film. I always have flyers with me for the film and when I see black kids into something weird, I'll go up to them and talk to them about the documentary. And they get all shy, especially when they're with white people. It's like they think, 'Why are you calling me out? It's taken this long for them to forget that I'm black!' And I think I know what that feels like, so maybe they'll recognize and see themselves in the other people in

the film." And as Spooner and most of his black subjects note, rock 'n' roll was an invention of African Americans. Mounting a fierce attack on the belief that rock is a "white thing," the subjects cite a long, semi-buried history of black innovation in guitar-based music being reconstructed by Detroit's Mick Collins (The Gories, The Dirtbombs) and Lisa Kekaula (The Bellrays) and more mainstream black artists like Mos Def and Wyclef Jean. As one interviewee suggests, "Check out Jimi."

Spooner offers no set resolution or fixed relation of race to punk rock, but does suggest that in the final tally, blackness is nonetheless policed in ways that a mohawk is not. An interviewee tells a story familiar to black men in America—being pulled over by police officers while out for a walk. "There's no question, I don't have to say, 'Am I a part of the black community?' I walk out and I figured out all black people are part of the black community. You don't have to do anything, you're black. That was comforting." The film fades to black to the sounds of his wry laughter.

Afro-Punk: The "Rock and Roll Nigger" Experience is currently being screened at independent film festivals and other venues across the North American continent. For more information about filmmaker James Spooner, the film itself, and its upcoming screening schedule, please check: <http://www.afropunk.com>. There is also a community messageboard at the website for further discussion and dialogue about the issues raised in the film. Unfortunately, Matt Davis, who appears as one of the four main interviewees in the film, died on August 10, 2003. There is an on-line memorial for him at: <http://www.ten-grand.com>. James can be reached at james@afropunk.com, and would love to bring the documentary to a screening near you. He is not as lazy as I am, because I will not be going on tour with the compilation zine Race Riot 2, unlike James, any time soon. Still, you can get a copy of the zine from Pander Zine Distro (<http://www.panderzinedistro>) and it will come to you. For other resources, check out the article on the history of black punks (1976-1983) in Roctober 32, written by James Porter and Jake Austen. And you can always get in touch with me at: Mimi Nguyen / POB 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906, or slander13@mindspring.com.



I do not think it is possible to isolate exactly when I got the idea to play music. I think the time between initial idea and actual execution was so

narrow that it was *fait accompli* once I had thunk it. I was 15 and I had been seeing bands play for the previous several months, but as I may have mentioned in the last column or two, they were local hardcore c. 1990—perhaps even Midwestern boy hardcore *par excellence*—that had nothing to do with my life other than I loved music with a slang of violence and malcontentedness to it. I happened

upon a Babes in Toyland show and I found the nameless need within sated; I saw and felt what I WANTED TO BE. I was doing my best to align myself with that rebel sound, in the breathless minutes and hours of STALE and wincing teenage days. That show transformed my every impetus.

During my 15th summer, I asked my dad to take me to Guitar Center, or maybe it was the regional-to-Minnesota Knut Koupee, armed with minimal cash cobbled from babysitting and delivering papers and an advance on birthday money and maybe some child support money, and I bought a guitar. It was what I would now recognize as some late '70s foreign-made SG knock-off with decent pick-ups. Then, I had no idea. I liked the way it looked; it looked old, like it could wield some decent damage. I paid about \$60. I bought it because it was the cheapest in the store. I didn't know what to look for in a guitar, so I simply plugged it in to an amp, just to make sure it worked, made sure it made a sound, and promptly unplugged it as I was shy about the sound it did make and didn't want to draw the attention or ire of any of the soloing Iron Maiden fans or pony-tailed salesmen. It came with a free strap. I did not buy a case for it, but rather, just carried it out awkwardly, defensively, aware that I was breaking protocol that I was only vaguely aware of.

I wanted to be in a band desperately. I discussed this at length with my primary source of punk rock influence, Andrew Semans. Andrew's older brother, Mac, had the record collection which was leading us out of the purgatorial stacks of 9th grade and into the promised land where Operation Ivy and Pussy Galore could be your favorite bands in the same week and everything you heard was raw inspiration. Andrew played bass, and suggested that I play bass, or at least start with bass, as upon his assessment, from across the desk-row in fourth-hour Health and Human Sexuality, guitar would be much too ambitious for someone with hands as mini as mine. Hands as averagely girl-sized as mine. Ted, Andrew's partner (who jammed in a Jane's Addiction/Chili Peppers "covers" "band") on the bowling team, conceded as much. Small girl hands mean you can't reach the frets correctly and I would have a hard time holding down chords. I was obsessed with Neil Young & Crazy Horse live albums, Kat Bjelland of Babes in Toyland, and had a crush on Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore only because I wanted to be him—I don't think anyone could have talked doubt into my ninth-grader animus, the part of me wholly consumed with the idea that squalls of feedback from Marshall stacks was divine comfort, long tearing squeals of oppressive scorching, a small series of RAT pedals coaxing the hand of the god sweetly from above, plying me into serenity into lucid abyss. I chafed at their assertion of lesser-than, as I would continue to for the 11 years I have been playing since.

The only time I ever snuck a boy into my room was because he told me he knew how to play every Neil Young song. Once I mastered the beginning of "Ohio," I kicked him out.

I have been in an excess of 20+ bands since I started playing music. I have switched from gtr to bass to drums to bass to gtr during that time. I have played in four bands seriously—those four were bands with all-women or women and dudes. The other 19 or so other bands I quit because inevitably, some dude in the band would start instructing me on how to play, or how not to play, or attempt to sexualize the agenda. When I moved to Chicago, I started playing—jamming—with some guys currently playing in a reasonable local quartet of renown. Within the first 15 minutes, the gtrist began telling me what to play, and to play it in a certain way so that they could effectively solo over it. I had been playing for several years longer than he had. I was just as adequate, original, and competent a musician as they were, and are, still. Yet, I felt discouraged enough by this happening, and happening again for the 19th or 270th time, that I didn't play in a band again until this year. I was tired of bickering and fighting it out and politely ignoring diluent attitudes; making excuses to myself about how whatever guy telling me what to do was actually a cool person, they were just young, they were just egocentric... making excuses for them exercising their male normative privilege right within our practice space or basement. After years and years of the same process, of active discouragement, of playing with men who were unwilling or simply unable to share power, who would not credit my ideas or input as being as valuable and as equal as theirs—I could not seem to get a creative foothold outside of myself. I grew tired and disinterested in further counterfeiting my own hope that my guitar solos could be valid, correct and not wrong.

And it was awful. I so desperately wanted, with such absolute core feeling, to have a band, to be playing with other people, to be learning from playing with other people, to join the ranks of punk rockedom, to contribute and set free with my bad ideas and hot concepts, to square off in front of my peers, and to rip off all of side three of *Daydream Nation* as best I could.

Thusly, for me, because of this static history, because I spent so much of my formative musical come-up in the trench, making music is inherently a political act. My incipient feminism and burgeoning luv of music were messily hinged upon each other from the go; they continually reflect upon and confront each other.

For that reason, I cannot sidestep that most every writing of mine in this magazine, or in my own, where I know my words will be read by other girls, and boys who themselves long to be liberated in a whole and lasting way by feminism, ushered by big affirming ideas, that those people, same as me, are tired of creeping like cats on the roof of our real and intended topics.

This is not just about just about emo lyrics being sexist. This is not a matter taking things too seriously. This is not a matter of me not having the right record collection. It is not a matter of embittered post-Riot Girl angst over unrealized love rock revolution. It is about the women I know having to use all the courage they can summon to battle for their words and expression to be validated or heard within communities they are in. It's about how the only places

women are finding real regard and open arms are in girl ghettos. It's about women retreating from punk rock as we know it cos the place is a shit-hole void. It's about how when girls/feminists herald DISCREPANCY unliberated boys decry BETRAYL.

The other night, I saw a documentary about radical '70s political faction, The Weathermen, who did a dozen or so inspired domestic bombings to draw attention to their anti-American/anti-bourgeoisie agenda—and in it, one of the leaders, Mark Rudd, was talking about how for years at the end of the '60s, whether he was having sex or up in the mountains, all he could think about was the war in Vietnam. And I understood. When I go to shows, I am watching for girls, what they are doing, are they being included, are they in this band, what is this band saying, what is this band not saying in their actions, in their words. I think about girls who have nothing to compare their desire to because they have yet to see a girl peer doing what they dream of, on a stage, on a record. I feel like we're all listening through the wall to the existence we dream of most playing out on the otherside, muted, being enjoyed and exercised without us. I dream of girls arising, with blessed hands ablaze with untold drum solos, admiring ourselves, undistracted by unpaid dues, willfully ignorant of the toll for entrance into Boyland Legit.

"There is one thing that is not practical, and it's the thing I believe in most, and that is the importance of vision in the midst of what has to be done, never forgetting for one minute the world you want to live in and how you want to live in it and what it means to you and how much you care about it—what you want for yourself and for the people that you love. Everywhere in this country people are told to be complacent because change is impossible. It is time to change the condition of women, finally and absolutely... that is my agenda"

— Andrea Dworkin

Write to me and I will write back: po box 14624 chicago il 60614 / mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com Now playing: Barbara Morgenstern Nacht Muss, Young People LP, Plastic Ono Band, Technotronic s/t, EPMD Strictly Business — on cassette.



Over the Line

My pal Andy and I arrived late for the opening day of the 50th annual Over The Line tournament on San Diego's Fiesta

Island this last July. Cars, pickups, SUVs and RVs had been piling into the outer lots of the two-square-mile island since dawn, and by noon the lanes were clogged. Heat addled rent-a-cops and belligerent, drunkening volunteers with names like "Choo Choo" stood guard over the various entry points into the fenced off park-

ing zones. Here is where we scored the first of several Gentleman Points for the day. Instead of drawing attention to the discrete number five on the parking tag that dangled from Andy's rear view mirror, we waved politely at each refusal and continued on. Almost a thousand parking passes had been issued for the event in sequential order, and a single digit number could only mean close personal connections to the event's founding fathers. On a distant bank of the island we found a spot on the sandy scrub of the outer road.

Over The Line is held by the Old Mission Beach Athletic Club (OMBAC) on two consecutive weekends every summer. Although the name refers to an OMBAC-invented sports mutation, Over The Line the event has blossomed, in the last half century, into an unruly "softball bacchanalia" somewhere on a family tree that includes Mardi Gras and the Philadelphia Mummers parade and St. Patrick's Day as celebrated by certain ruffian New Yorkers. Later, I would alarm several San Diego friends when telling them where I'd just been. "Oh," they would say quietly. "Really?...." To the faithful, OTL is "one of the last pure Southern California traditions left untouched by commercialism." To many average San Diegans the event is an annual Caucasian nightmare alcohol meltdown.

I've never been on an island with thousands of drunk people before, and I hadn't expected it to be so peaceful. Andy knew the most direct overland shortcut from the road to the games. We crested a small hill and descended into a barren depression of thistle and weeds several football fields long. Fiesta Island is bordered by Seaworld to the south, Mission Bay Park to the east; upscale La Jolla to the north, and the Pacific tranquility of Mission Beach to the west. If I hadn't known that the entire island had been sculpted from garbage and silt in the 1950's, I could've imagined that we'd gone back in time by a few centuries. It says something about the political muscle of OMBAC that such prime real estate has been left undeveloped. Although there is an alleged sewage-sludge drying facility elsewhere on the island, the place remains a largely wild enclave inside a major US city, a rare "recreational zone" that involves no concrete. We scrambled up another dune and found ourselves staring down at a distant mass of human unruliness. 50,000 people were expected this year.

Andy has been coming to Over The Line since childhood. At the grandstand—"the bracketboard" in this universe—we met up with Andy's dad Don, a San Diego attorney who looks like a younger, more handsome Stan Lee. Don has been the announcer and chieftain of Over The Line for three decades. Overhead, the flags of the United States, California, Budweiser Racing, Bacardi Rum and POW-MIA fluttered side by side. A steel drum band played on the sand below and, on second glance; I understood that two bears were fucking on the California flag. A trio of wise men dressed as Saddam, Osama and Fidel loitered nearby. We walked around the bracketboard. Don emerged from the back entrance in

his white nautical OMBAC blazer with gold epaulettes, looked off into the distance and said, "I'm not sure most people get it." He would be announcing roughly a thousand matches over the course of the 12-hour day.

We headed south as Don's voice boomed across the throng from battered, 1960s loudspeakers. Competition is at its loosest on the first day of OTL, and the team names reflect this. These fell into several categories. There were the adolescent (Boner Donors, Hand Starting The One Eyed Yogurt Thrower, I Need A Price Check On Some Extra Large Condoms), the profoundly adolescent (Let Us Jizz On Your Giant Jugs, Snapper Crapper Or Yapper We Stick Em All, We Might Have Small Dicks But Our Wives Have Big Tits), the wrong (J-Lo Is My Dyke Bitch, Is That Your Vagina Or A Roast Beef Sandwich) and the profoundly wrong (Thank God For SARS I'm Sick Of Chinese Food, Help Prevent Rape...Consent). I heard a few teams announced that would have worked as interesting band names (Wolf Noodle Soup, Aged Beef, Jewish Defense League). Is it a coincidence that there was a team called Circle Jerks? If OTL humor shares much of the gleeful offense of hardcore band names, there are strange social force-fields involved. I caught plenty of French bashing, and even a few lingering Monica Lewinsky jokes. But I heard no Reagan Alzheimer's puns, no space shuttle Columbia humor. I asked Andy if any team names had ever been vetoed on grounds of decorum. He thought about this a moment. "After John Wayne died, I remember no one was allowed to have any teams making fun of him."

More eccentricities: OTL's ageless "Three B's Rule" (No bottles, babies or bowsers [dogs]) had been amended to include "No B'whining." The Two Commandments—"we never have any fun" and "no dumbshit questions"—appeared on hundreds of signs, shirts and hats. If that sounds like a huge in-joke, that's because it mostly is. Normally when something is this impenetrable to outsiders, I suspect an agenda.... like four hours in I'll be taken to see a Scientology video. In this case, below the surface was... more surface. I have to admit that the lack of commercialization was startling. This was Halloween for the silent majority.

We walked to a VIP liquor tent. Andy had gotten gravely tanked at the 48th OTL and was showing restraint this year. I ordered a free soda with my wristband and made a sour face on tasting Rum and Coke, flat and on tap. We sat in the shade. At some point people started gazing skyward. Here's where my notes get a little fuzzy. A group of Navy SEALs descended by parachute (a normally \$30,000 demonstration given free, in exchange for a recruiting tent by the bracketboard). As I peered towards the blazing sun, trying to catch the silhouetted squiggles, the half a cup of spirits in my gut worked its magic. This was maybe a quarter of all the alcohol I've ever consumed, and I learned an important lesson: don't drink in the hot sun. In my momentary stupor, I missed the SEALs landing their parachutes, a quick citizen's arrest of the Saddamn

Hussein impersonator, the presentation of Saddam Hussein to the US Navy, the awarding of a giant cardboard check for \$25 million to Andy's dad, the SEALs being given free drink wristbands and eventually forming their own team, which quickly lost. But what was the Navy SEAL team called? And did anyone join their cause at the recruiting booth?

At the port-o-johns, more revelations. There were toilets for Men, Women, OMBAC members, OMBAC members with lapdancer, People Of Color, Muslims, and Jews. I took a nice photo of the Jews bathroom. We walked along the southern track. Every 40 feet or so we were stopped by men on the far side of middle age, Andy's "uncles," and I was repeatedly made to show off my classic 1980 OTL "Announcer Stand Stupidos" shirt, a gift from Don. "Jesus Christ, Andy," the men would say, jabbing stout fingers into my back, trying to figure out which cartoon figure represented their younger self. "I haven't seen this shirt in years."

Theoretically this was a sports event, and I made several attempts to watch the game itself. I understood that each team had only three players that the bats were aluminum that the foul lines in the OTL geometric softball field extend to infinity. I understood, from hearing their name repeatedly announced, that Time Out My Balls Hurt must've had some competent players. And yet it was hard to concentrate. Have I mentioned the penises? I'm hard pressed to recall the last time I saw so much cock. Representational, of course—there were six foot inflatable dicks, cloth dongs hanging out of shorts, rubber dick noses disguises, limp foam schlongs on hats that obviously saw action precisely one time a year. Several times we were passed by the "weenie wagon", a golf cart rigged with a squirting erection, driven, as busy work, by some forgotten old man of OMBAC.

The sun intensified. Every 50 feet, women in bikinis were implored by drunk men to doff their tops. It's not fair or accurate to imply that all women on the island were harassed. But as soon as any lady made it clear she would be revealing her secrets, men descended in packs, like seagulls fighting over bread rolls. We completed our three-hour circuit of the playing fields, sun stroked and dehydrated, moving slower and slower through a congealing sea of drunks, of burnt lobster flesh. A sense of menace crept into the proceedings. Back at the bracketboard, Andy's dad wearily told us that they'd sold 12,000 shirts by midday, an all-time record.

We trudged back to the parking spot. I will have melanomas 10 years from now to remember the day by. Although it was easy to view OTL as a precursor to all of civilization hurling itself down the toilet, it was even easier to picture the exact opposite. Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry may very well have felt at home on the sands of Fiesta Island, tanked, shrieking, waving their aluminum bats at Saddam, Fidel and Osama, locked in man's eternal struggle against fellow man, rising to meet Time Out My Balls Hurt on a field yet to come.

Noice of Employment

If I can share my defeats with you all, I guess I am kind of obliged to pass along the triumphs... I have been hired by Borders. I am employee 406 at store 497. This is in Chino, a city known for its men's prison, Snoop Dogg's Little League team, and an overpowering agricultural stench. These days Chino is also known for the mall that houses my employers, one of those places that looks like it was built eight to 10 minutes ago. I have driven around this complex at night, and it seems to have no end.

As minimum wage retail jobs go, it could be worse. By my second week I didn't want to punch anyone in the face anymore. I have no complaints with my coworkers. But it's not a place for people who like books. My first shift spilled into the midnight release of the fifth Harry Potter hardback, and by 2 a.m. I found myself face to face with misty-eyed 40-year-olds in Dr. Who scarves. This was a priceless, unrepeatably experience, so obviously the climax of my employment that I should have quit at the end of the night. Although being a cashier has its hidden rewards. For every petty humiliation, there is a vignette of hope: the kid who told me "you guys have a bitchin' D&D section," the angry Russian in sunglasses who actually said "we are buyink [sic] somewhere else," the balding black guy who came up to me with an English-Korean dictionary, chuckling, saying "we have a language *emergency*." And I can't say I haven't learned anything at this job. I never would have known that Rodney King will be cutting a rap album if a customer hadn't told me.

Here's the thing: *Punk Planet* is carried in this store. Although I've never actually sold a copy (I did ring up one *Maximumrocknroll*—to Bill T, of Pillsbury Hardcore—and was stymied by its lack of a barcode), this magazine always winds up floating to the front of the music periodicals, able to hold its own against *Source* and *Vibe*, no help from me. So what is my journalistic duty in this situation? ☺



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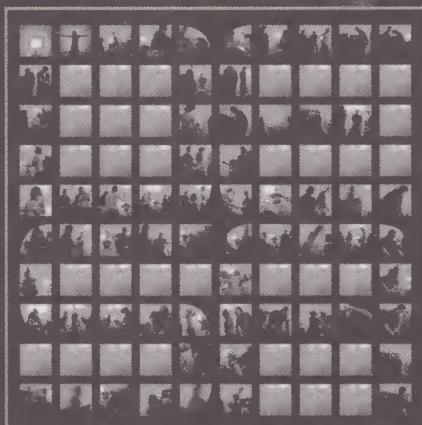
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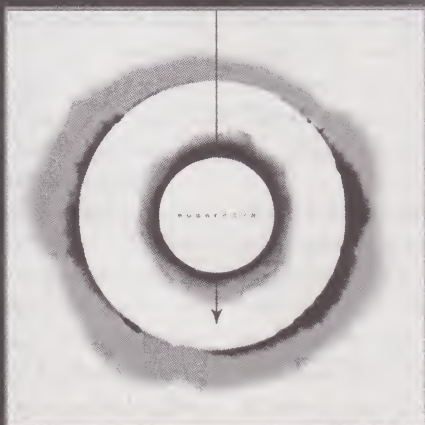
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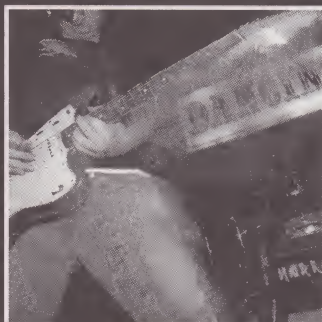


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Power Lines

by John McNally

The power company in Chicago wanted to do something nice for the kids, so they let the city construct parks where their power line towers sat. Where I lived were three of these parks, each with a two-hoop basketball court, a swing-set, a merry-go-round, a slide, and a couple of giant cast-iron insects that sat atop industrial-sized springs, all of this in the shadows of wires, hundreds of them, strung from tower to tower like garlands at Christmastime. Every few hours the power lines surged, and the buzzing, growing louder, was the sound I imagined a man in an electric chair heard as his own sour spirit detached from his body, the way a large Band-Aid peels from a leg.

I wasn't much of an athlete, but I liked throwing my basketball around at New Castle Park, one of the three parks with the power line towers. Everyone I knew watched the Harlem Globetrotters on TV, and for a while it seemed that every kid in town owned a red, white, and blue basketball. At least once a day you'd see some poor kid trying to dribble a figure-eight between and around his legs. It

was embarrassing to watch — their bulging-eyed concentration, their rigor mortis legs forming an upside-down U, the slippery ball flipped into the street, sometimes in front of a speeding car. My favorite Globetrotters were Meadowlark Lemon and Curly Neal, but I knew I'd never be able to do what they could do, and so I was satisfied with banging the basketball off the backboard, occasionally making a basket, all under the constant hum and crackle of the power lines. I threw that ball again and again, trying to empty my head of all thoughts. It wasn't as easy as it sounded, draining away your own past and future, trying to exist in whatever moment I happened to be in — not a second before and not a second after. This was how I imagined insects spent their days. I had stared hard into the eyes of a fly once, wondering if it ever, even for a second, thought about what it had done the day before. One time I stared at a grasshopper for thirty minutes, hoping for a sign, a look of reflection, but I wasn't so sure that it even remembered what it was doing when I first began looking at it. One thing I learned was that it

was difficult to *not* think about anything because thinking about *not* thinking was actually thinking about *something*. The idea of *nothing* fascinated me. I loved the idea of *nothing* because it didn't seem possible. How could there ever be *nothing*? There couldn't! And so I'd throw the ball, again and again, until I'd get a splitting headache trying to think of *nothing* but thinking about everything else instead. I always got a headache playing basketball, and I always took it as a sign that I should stop and go home.

One day in the fall, just after the start of eighth grade, I saw my friend Ralph trudging along New Castle Avenue, dragging a burlap bag behind him. Ralph had failed both the third and fifth grades, making him the oldest student in Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Grade School. I wasn't sure why we were friends, but I wasn't sure about a lot of things back then, so I didn't think much about it.

"What's in there?" I yelled from the basketball court.

Ralph stopped then looked up and around, into the air, as if he'd been hearing voices his entire life.

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"Over here!" I said.

Ralph turned, saw me. He didn't smile. He didn't wave. He nodded, which was about as friendly of a greeting as a person could expect from Ralph, then made his way over. His wallet was connected to a long, drooping chain that rattled when he walked, and he was wearing a hooded sweatshirt with the hood up. The bag slid up the curb then bounced across the park's grass.

He said, "What're you doing? Playing basketball by yourself?"

"You want to play some Horse?" I asked.

"Horse?" He narrowed his eyes, as if the game that I had suggested involved one of us riding the other one around the basketball court. I hadn't really thought about it before, but I'd never seen Ralph in possession of any kind of sporting equipment. Since Ralph was two years older than the other eighth graders, the principal wouldn't let him take gym class with us. I wasn't even sure what he *did* during that period. He said, "You come here a lot? By yourself?"

"All the time," I said.

Ralph nodded. He said, "My cousins, they know a guy who knows a guy who knows something about electricity. See these power lines? This guy, the one who

knows this guy that my cousins know, he said that if you spent too much time around these things, you'll end up sterile."

"Sterile?" I said. I suspected that the look I was giving him was the same look that he'd given me at the suggestion of Horse. I knew that being sterile meant that I would never have kids and I knew roughly what part of my body it had to do with, but I wasn't sure of the specifics. How, for instance, could something that didn't even touch me make me sterile?

"Who's this guy?" I asked.

"He's some guy who knows a guy who knows my cousins."

"And he's an expert on electricity?"

"So I've been told," Ralph said.

We stood there a moment without saying a word. The power lines sizzled above. I looked down at Ralph's burlap bag — a gunny sack, my mother would have called it. There was a lump in it, about the size and shape of a small animal, like a possum.

Ralph said, "I better not stand here long. I normally don't even walk on this street."

"Afraid of getting sterile?" I asked.

I expected Ralph to laugh or at least smile, but he didn't. He nodded. "Don't want to risk it," he said.

Ralph started heading back to the street, dragging the lump behind him. I was about to yell out to him, to ask again what was in his sack, but a sharp pain tore through my head, causing me to drop the basketball. The ball bounced once, twice, a third time, each bounce closer together than the last, until it was vibrating against the ground, then dying and rolling toward the fence. To stop thinking about the searing pain in my head, I tried imagining what was in Ralph's sack. A cat? A bucket's worth of sand? A couple of meatloaves? I shut my eyes and concentrated hard, harder than I had ever concentrated in my life, and while the power lines started to surge, their buzz growing so loud I was afraid that the towers themselves were going to burst into flames, an image of what was in the sack finally came to me: a baby, *my* baby, and Ralph, like some ghost from the future, rattling chains but spooked by his own sad mission, had come to show me what would never be. ©

John McNally is author of the story collection Troublemakers (Iowa, 2000). "Power Lines" is from his forthcoming novel-in-stories, The Book of Ralph, which will be released by The Free Press in early 2004. A Chicago native, McNally now lives and teaches in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

LOW SKIES THE BED

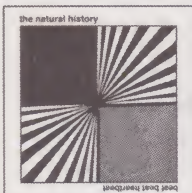


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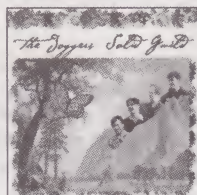
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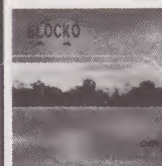
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Make T-Shirt Undies!

By Cate Levinson

I hate shopping for underwear. I've hated it ever since my first trip to Swartz's Lingerie when my grandmother, who worked as a seamstress there, ushered her coworkers, one-by-one into my dressing room saying in broken English, "Dis is my youngest granddaughter, she buying her first brassiere, can you believe dis? I see dat she grew in her left bosom. For years she's like dis." Then laughing she held her manicured hands in front of her chest, one like it held a tennis ball, the other pushed her own breast flat like a pancake.

But it isn't just my babushka's special brand of aversion therapy that makes me sneer every time I hear the words "Victoria's Secret" or "intimate apparel department." As I get older, my list of grievances against the lingerie industry grows. First, lingerie is outrageously expensive and even the inferior stuff—which is often uncomfortable, ugly, and/or made by child-laborers in Malaysia—will put a pretty big dent in your wallet. Second, while there are a million different cuts, colors, and brands out there, somehow this very personal apparel in no way fits my own personal style. So rather than resent these bare necessities until I'm old and saggy, I've been looking for a solution to this frustrating problem.

Finally one day my friend Annie—a genius in all things crafty—noticed the mountain of old T-shirts that I keep squirreled away and said, "Catie, you *never* wear these. If you won't toss them, maybe you should do something with them." Then she furrowed her brow and wrinkled her nose and said, "You could totally make them into underwear!"

Ingredients

- A T-shirt
- Thin elastic cord (You can find this at any fabric store. You'll need enough to fit around both legs and your waist.)
- 6"x4" piece of clean fabric
- A sewing machine—or if you prefer to sew by hand, a thread, scissors, thimble, what have you
- Big sheet of paper to make a pattern
- One pair of old undies (pick an old pair that has the shape you want)

Making the Pattern

First take your hip measurement (make sure you measure yourself at the widest part). Divide this measurement in half, and then add one inch. This is how wide your pattern must be across.

The next step will require a little bit of sacrifice: Take the old pair of undies and either break the seam using a seam ripper, or just cut it along the seams so that the front and the back are separate. Use the two pieces to trace a pattern on the sheet of paper, using the width you figured out and then adding 1/2 inch to the top and the bottom.

T-Shirt for the Tush

Find the shirt that you want to wear on your booty and make sure it's clean (you may want to give this process a test run to make sure you

don't ruin any prized possessions... use one of your more disposable T-shirts for the first try). Cut the two main pattern pieces first, and then cut the crotch piece out of the same shirt—or keep a couple of scrap shirts on hand so that you can cut a bunch of crotch pieces to have on hand.

Pick up the Pieces

So let's put all these pieces together. First take the crotch piece and hem the wider end, folding the edge over once. On a flat surface, line up the front and back pieces with the right sides together, and the butt-side facing up. Place the crotch piece wrong-side-up (the side that will not touch you when you wear it) on the butt piece, and mirror the front piece of the other side. Pin the three layers together at the crotch and then pin the sides. Double-stitch the sides.

For the crotch, sew all three layers together along the lower edge, leaving about 1/3" seam allowance. Fold the crotch piece around to the front, so that it lines up with the front section, and pin it in place. The point of all this is so the bottom inside seam is covered.

So check it out . . . you've got undies! (Well, almost—now would be a really good time to try them on to see how they fit. They should be pretty loose around the leg holes and the waist and snug around the hips. If they're not snug at the hips, now is when you should sew the side seams together again, making the hips fit better)

The Edge

Sew using a zig-zag stitch around the leg holes and the waist, without folding the edges over. Sew along the crotch piece as if it is just part of the front piece. You don't have to worry that there's an opening at the front of the crotch piece because it will be sewn down at the sides.

Finish It!

Fold the edges over about 1/3", right side out, and zig-zag stitch around all three holes again. Then do it again, only this time be sure to fold over enough material to make a sleeve large enough for the elastic. Also, leave about 3/4 inch of the leg holes unsewn at the hips and leave a bit unsewn at the back of the waist so you have a narrow sleeve of fabric around each hole and an opening in each sleeve through which to string the elastic.

Make it Snappy

Cut the elastic cord into three pieces, one piece for the waist and one for each leg hole, but give each piece a little extra length that you will cut off later. Hook a small safety pin on the end of the elastic and use this a guide as you feed the elastic through the sleeves. Try on the undies again, and cinch up the elastic until it fits you just right, and use the safety pin to indicate where the elastic should be sewn together. Then, sew the elastic and cut off the slack that remains, and sew up the remaining seams.

That's all there is to it. Now go out there and enjoy the underwear you made yourself! ©

DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

Hail Cesar!

In the Western world food is a daily focus of our lives, yet we are radically disconnected from it. A place of production identifies the source, but rarely do we consider the workforce that aids a food product's generation.

Historically, farm workers have suffered under unfair labor conditions. Easy targets for abuse, farm workers for years fought for their civil rights under the leadership of one man, Cesar Chavez. April 23 of this year marked the third anniversary of Chavez's death—on the occasion, a US postage stamp was created in his name. Founder of the United Farm Workers of America, Chavez dedicated his life to fight for the civil rights of farm workers.

Chavez, a second generation American of Mexican heritage was born into farm life in 1927 on his grandfather's homesteaded farm near Yuma, Arizona. Losing the farm during the Depression years, Chavez and his family were forced into migrant farming. This led to his attendance in over 30 elementary schools, as he worked his way through the fields and vineyards of the Southwest, beginning at the age of 10. Eventually, he dropped out of school in the eighth grade to continue supporting his family.

Later, he joined the US Navy, serving in WWII near its end in 1945. He returned to the West Coast farmland of California, living in the San Jose barrio, where he met his wife, Helen. While working at an apricot orchard, Chavez discovered his calling when he crossed paths with an organizer for the Community Service Organization, Fred Ross. Ross was working under the Industrial Areas Foundation, a group founded by Saul Alinsky in Chicago.

The IAF was based on the principle of "people's organizations" which sought to provide the average person with a measure of power within their lives and communities. The sole purpose of these organizations was to connect the individual with the larger society. The CSO was a branch of this effort and still operates today in communities across the country.

By the time Chavez met Ross, labor relations in America were clearly separated into three union camps with the formation of American Federation of Labor (AFL), the Committee of Industry Office (CIO) and the Teamsters Union. Chavez began working with Ross and the CSO in 1952. He started as a full-time organizer, creating new chapters throughout California and Arizona, while battling racial and economic discrimination against Latinos. Chavez eventually rose to become the national director of the CSO in the late 1950s and served until the early 1960s. His community outreach efforts were helpful in fostering his next step involving a more personal cause: farm workers rights.

When the CSO wouldn't commit to assisting farm workers,

Chavez resigned from the organization. He moved his family to Delano, California and founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), later becoming the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA). His work focused on achieving fair wages, medical coverage, pension benefits and all around humane conditions for farm workers.

"If you're outraged at conditions," Chavez used to say, "then you can't possibly be free or happy until you devote all your time to changing them and do nothing but that, but you can't change anything if you want to hold onto a good job, a good way of life and avoid sacrifice."

By 1965 Chavez's NFWA joined the AFL-CIO-sponsored farm unions in striking against major Delano grape growers. Chavez led a five year strike/boycott that rallied national support of unions, church groups, students, minorities, and, probably most effectively, consumers. Committed to non-violent protesting, Chavez fasted for 25 days in 1968 in order to reaffirm the organization's principle of non-violence and his commitment to the farm labor movement.

In 1966 the two farm workers unions merged to form the United Farm Workers (UFW), affiliated with the AFL-CIO, as it is today. By 1970 grape growers initiated contracts with the UFW, hoping to avoid boycotts. In the meantime, other vegetable growers were negotiating deals with the Teamsters Union. When the UFW contracts came up for review in 1973, the growers went with the Teamsters and 10,000 farm workers in the California coastal valleys walked off the fields.

Chavez called for a new grape boycott. A poll taken in 1975 showed that 17 million Americans were in support of his efforts and effectively boycotting. In response to general agricultural upheaval, California's then governor Jerry Brown signed the Agricultural Labor Relations Act in 1975—the first industry-wide labor contracts in American agricultural history. The growers were forced to support it. Later, the Act's enforcement virtually ceased under Governor George Dukmejian's tenure.

In his tenure with the UFW, Chavez's pay never reached beyond \$6,000 a year, like other officers and staff members. He never owned a house, and had no savings to pass on to his family upon his death. Yet his contribution in achieving civil rights for farm workers is *massive*. By establishing union contracts—initiating the first in 1966 at the Schenley Vineyard in California—farm workers were given rest periods, clean drinking water, hand washing facilities, protective clothing against pesticide exposure, guaranteed seniority rights, and job security. Chavez helped create a credit union for farm workers, a pension plan, and a medical plan.

EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

He helped outlaw DDT and other poisonous pesticides and instituted a monitoring system for farm workers exposed to pesticides. Contracts eventually provided workers with parental leave and a profit-sharing plan. In 1966 the National Farm Worker Service Center was established as a nonprofit organization separate from the UFW. Radio Campesina, a Spanish-language umbrella station, was established to network three states of farm worker radio stations—effective in promoting a community of workers. Additionally, the organization built single-family homes and rental complexes for farm and other low-income workers.

Chocolate, Mexican style

Mexican chocolate is dark and coarse in texture due to the ground almonds and cinnamon in most brands you can buy in the store. Abuelita or Ibarra are two good choices. One tablet (around 3.3 ounces) will make about three cups of chocolate. Chocolate preparation, Aztec style, is similar to traditional Japanese tea: the dry ingredients were whipped with a small whisk as water was poured into the glass, creating foam on the top of the drink. Now, we have the modern convenience of the blender.

2 1/2 cups water (or milk)
1 tablet of chocolate, chopped

1. Bring water to a boil and reduce heat to a simmer.
2. Add chocolate and stir until the chocolate is melted.
3. Transfer the mixture to a blender and whip for a few minutes.
4. Add any additional flavorings, like vanilla or chilis, as your taste allows. Let the mixture stand for about 15 minutes before serving to let the flavors develop.

If you don't add flavorings, serve immediately. Enjoy.

In April 1993, Chavez died at the age of 66. More than 40,000 people turned out for his funeral. In 1991, he was posthumously awarded Mexico's highest honor to those of Mexican heritage that have made major contributions outside of the country, the *Aguila Azteca*—Aztec Eagle. In 1994, President Clinton also posthumously lauded Chavez with the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian honor in the US.

The symbol of the UFW is an eagle. Chavez's brother, Richard, designed the logo, which became a flag to represent the union. He squared off the edges of the eagle's wings so it would be easier for members to draw. The Aztec eagle was meant to instill pride in the migrant farm workers. As Chavez

said, "A symbol is an important thing. That is why we chose the Aztec eagle. It gives pride . . . when people see it, they know it means dignity."

The Aztecs were the most powerful group living in Mexico from 1325 AD to 1519. During this time, chocolate was a favorite drink of the most powerful in the empire, including members of the royal house, merchants, and warriors. The Aztecs preferred this to the drink *octli*—an alcoholic beverage derived from the agave plant. Since drunkenness was looked down upon in the Aztec culture, chocolate was the preferred beverage. The only difference between Mayan and the Aztec methods of drinking chocolate was the Mayans drank it hot, while the Aztecs preferred a cold beverage.

There were many varieties of the chocolate drink. Various seeds and chilis were ground into the beverage, as well as honey, vanilla, and flower infusions. It was typically served at the end of a meal, along with tobacco.

The priests, poets and philosophers of Aztec culture referred to chocolate as *yollotl*, *extli*—literally heart, blood. The cacao pod was a symbol for the human heart, ripped out during sacrifice.

For some, the actions of labor unions could be likened to a blood and chocolate situation. As unions have advanced, it has become less about the individual and more about the larger organization. Chavez, in his modest beginnings, was merely fighting for the rights of his family and those around him—individual rights afforded to us within a larger society. Like Elvis Costello once sang, "Blood and chocolate". . . You think it's over now, but we've only just begun." There is of course always work to be done. If we're as passionate as Chavez, it can be done. ©

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

Sometimes when my guy fingers me, he has me turn over on my stomach. It makes me feel like he thinks I'm ugly and doesn't want to look at my face. I told him that it makes me feel this way, but he said he loves my face but he also loves my ass. So why does he have me turn over? I couldn't quite understand his reason—I think it's because he likes to see my ass jiggle in his face, but I really don't know why.

OK, we seem to have two different issues here:

1) Why does your boyfriend like to turn you over when he is fingering you?

Only your boyfriend knows why he turns you over, but it is not uncommon for people to like to look at their partner's ass while they are having sex. In heterosexual relationships, it is pretty common for the guy to get behind the woman so he can penetrate her anally or vaginally with his dick, fingers, or dildo. He can also feel on her breasts while he does so and maybe kiss the back of her neck. Many women find this a quite pleasurable way to have sex. In addition to this being a good way to try new positions, it can afford the guy a lovely view of his lady's rear end—and there are plenty of guys out there who enjoy looking at a woman's ass while they penetrate her. There is absolutely *nothing* wrong with enjoying a full moon!

However, it is still relatively unusual in heterosexual sexual encounters, for the girl to be behind the boy (unless she's giving a massage or pegging him with a strap-on) so it can seem a little uneven sometimes (girls end up looking at a lot of headboards). I might suggest that perhaps you try a little reverse action on your guy and get him on his hands and knees next time you give him a hand job. It may be a little more work for you, but it might give you an idea of why this way of having sex can be appealing. But I think there may be some deeper issues here, so on to part two . . .

2) Is he being too sexually controlling?

So, like I said, it is pretty normal for a guy to want to do it from behind (and totally normal for girls to like it that way). That said, you sound like you aren't comfortable with this or satisfied with his reasoning for why he does it, SO WHY DO YOU DO IT? You are in control of your sexuality, not him. Remember that old

saying "just say no"? Well do it sister! Next time he tries to flip you over, tell him, "No baby, I want to look at YOU while we do it".

If he can't communicate satisfactorily why he wants to plug you from the rear, especially after you have told him your fears, don't give it up to him that way. Any guy worth keeping around should understand your concerns. He should either make an effort to convince you that it is your sweet ass he is after—not your "ugly" mug that he is avoiding—or else he should say something like, "OK cool. I don't want to make you uncomfortable".

If he knows that you don't like it this way and he keeps doing it, then he is an asshole and you should dump him. But if you aren't communicating this to him and keep you doing what he tells you—despite your own desires—well, you can't blame him for thinking this is OK with you.

Dear Sex Lady,

From the time I started having sex six years ago I have never had an orgasm from actual sex. My boyfriend and I have tried everything out there! The only way I ever get an orgasm is from rubbing on my clit and that is only once in a while. I have to totally concentrate on it and it takes forever to get to that point. I can tell my boyfriend is getting frustrated. Is there anything that can be done about this? —F.

The first thing that you should know is that *very* few women ever have orgasms just from some guy sticking his dick in her and rubbing it back and forth a few times. That sure would be convenient for us all, but for whatever reason, our bodies just aren't made that way. Most women need clitoral stimulation in order to have an orgasm and that is—what class—PERFECTLY NORMAL! Let me just repeat this one more time. *It is 100 percent absolutely normal for a woman to only be able to climax with clitoral stimulation.* So stop fretting about it! This has to be the number one misconception about sex out there.

Every day women come into my shop who have similar questions and it breaks my heart. Why aren't we teaching our kids and each other that it isn't true? Women's pleasure and sexuality, while greatly enhanced for many by the presence of a penis, does not rely *solely* on that penis for fun. Look, most guys can come pretty quickly—it varies of course and I am sure there are plenty of people who have experienced a man who took *too* long to come,. In this boy-centered society of ours, we chicks are

expected to keep up and come when they do, by the same method that they do. We can't blame all of them—most guys out there are taught the same thing that women are about female sexuality: nothing.

Chances are, it is going to take most women longer to come than it is going to take her male partner. If you are looking to speed up your response time, there are a few things you can do.

First, you could masturbate (or have him stimulate you) before you start having intercourse. Get yourself juiced up and heading towards climax. While you are "doing it," continue to stimulate your clit with your hand or a vibrator or his hand or whatever. You may find that you can come in a more timely fashion that way.

Also, if you haven't tried a vibrator yet, I *strongly* suggest you try one. You may find that the vibrations are just what you need to send you over the edge. There are even vibes now that are attached to cockrings, so he can wear it while fucking you, giving you clitoral stimulation at the same time.

There are also some clitoral stimulating gels. However, these are something I recommend with reservations. While they can increase the bloodflow to your clit, making it more sensitive, many of them don't work very well and cost *way* too much. The only one I recommend is call O' My Clitoral Stimulating Gel. It isn't too expensive and it *really* works for a lot of women. My fear about the clit gel, though, is that people will use it because they think women should come as fast as men and they think that this is a quick fix. Please, please, *please* accept the fact that women can take longer to come than men and enjoy the fact that you can spend lots of time being sexually stimulated by yourself and your partner. If he finishes and you aren't done yet, suggest that he go down on you and if he is too beat—or too much of a dickhead—to do it, finish the job yourself and feel good about taking care of yourself. I have said this before and I will say it again: if he comes and you still want to, sex isn't over until you have had your big O.

One last thing: can we *please* stop using the term "actual sex" here. What is "actual sex"? If you are talking about vaginal/penis intercourse, say that. If you touch someone's genitals, that is "actual sex." Lots of people have "actual sex" without ever having a dick stuck in a vagina—they are called homosexuals. ©

E-mail me at diysex@punkplanet.com. My shop, *Early to Bed*, is at 5232 N. Sheridan in Chicago. We're online at www.early2bed.com.

Salad Days



Charles Romalotti

A classic punk coming-of-age novel. A fast-paced, engrossing, and thoroughly enjoyable read. - *Ramsey Kanaan, AK Press*

Salad Days is a poignant memoir. Romalotti has a skill for character development, dialogue, and rich detail. - *Al Quint, Suburban Voice*

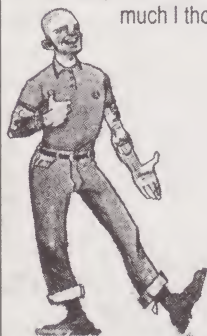
This is a solid read, and anybody with an ounce of passion for what this music is all about will have a hard time putting it down. The last page of the book actually gave me goose bumps.

- *Askew Reviews*

The touching tale of your life, through the eyes of one Frank Smith. Everything you've experienced is here between the covers. Honest, sincere, forthright. - *Gadget fanzine*

Salad Days is the kind of book that just hit too close to home. No shit kids, this is good reading. The incidents and images Romalotti portrays in the book are so striking and real, bringing back so many memories. I cannot explain to you how much I thoroughly enjoyed this book. No kidding, it's that good.

- *Tim Oi, Boots fanzine*



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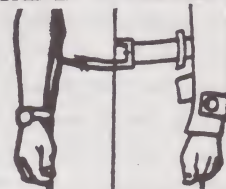
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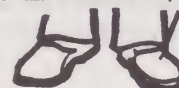
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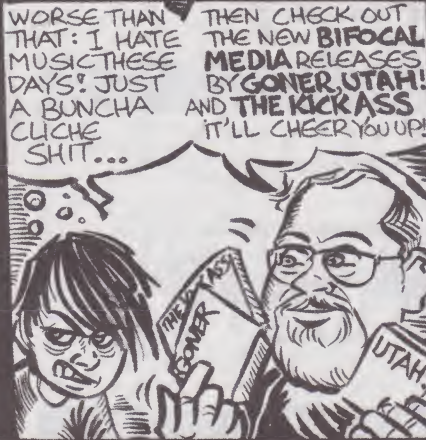
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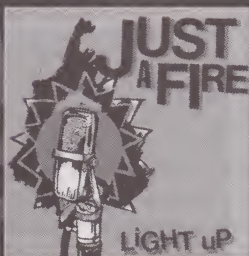
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music

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Eric Action (EA), Amy Adoyzie (AA), Jay Castaldi (JC), Vincent Chung (VC), Carla Costa (CC), Brian Czarnek (BC), Art Ettinger (AE), Erica Gallagher (EG), Melissa Geils (MG), Julie Gerstein (JG), Dave Hofer (DH), Ari Joffe (AJ), Tim Kuehl (TK), Dan Laidman (DAL), Krystle Miller (KM), Dana Morse (DM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Sonia Pereira (SP), Rex Reason (RR), George Sanchez (GBS), Neal Shah (NS), Dan Sinker (DS) Edited by Kyle Ryan (KR)

A Thousand Times Yes – Michigan, CD

The cover art is way too good for a poppy emo band this crappy. (JG)
Isoxy's Records, 338 W. Parent Ave., Royal Oak, MI 48067

A Trunk Full Of Dead Bodies – My Smile, Her Corpse, CDEP

The coolest thing about this album is the artwork. I guess they're an emo band that would rather kill their ex-girlfriends than cry about 'em. Shit, man, I thought this was gonna be way heavy. Aside from the homicidal lyrics, they don't sound any different than a wimpy, pretty-boy band. (AJ)
Dressed To Kill Records, PO Box 24716, Philadelphia, PA 19111, www.dressedtokill.org

Ad Astra Per Aspera – An Introduction To, 7"

"And now for something entirely different..." is the best way to describe the crazy sound mixture that is Ad Astra Per Aspera. Taking elements of hardcore, pop and electronica, Ad Astra Per Aspera unleash a calculated barrage of experimental catchiness that no one else has had the guts to try. (BN)
Big Brown Shark, 1608 W. 37th St. #110, Kansas City, MO 64111

ADD/C / Giant Bags Of Weed – split, 7"

This battle of the basement punk bands is an easy call. Indiana's Giant Bags Of Weed is so half-assed that it seems like at any moment their equipment will fall apart. But Tennessee's ADD/C holds up a solid, street-punk sound with nasty-hot guitar riffs, thunder clap drums and angst-ridden vocals. (CC)
Half-day Records, PO Box 3381, Bloomington, IN 47402

Age of Ruin – The Longest Winters Woes, CD

Here's an interesting concept with great execution, combining the melodic aspect of Scandinavian metal with intense hardcore. The final product sounds a bit like Grade, but with heavier roots in metal. Pleasing metal and hardcore fans alike can be a tough job, but they seem to do it with ease. (TK)
DFF Records, PO Box 686, Millersville, MD 21108, www.dffrecords.net

Agriculture Club – Farmageddon, CD

Irreverent rock 'n' roll seething with the spirit of Willie Nelson and Lemmy. Agriculture Club has probably been compared to Supersuckers, and that's a shame, because this rock 'n' roll outfit can definitely hold its own. *Farmageddon* is cow punk to the core. (GBS)
Catch & Release 2030 34th Ave. SW, Calgary, Alberta, T2T 2C3, Canada, www.catch-and-release.org

Alleged Gunmen – Audio Invasion, 7"

The feel is of an early Clash reggae track. From the Strummer-esque "KA-KHA's," the relentless clean strums and a voice that sounds like

Mick Jones, this is for Clash fans. The instrumental track has an early LA Plugz vibe. Good shit. (GBS)

Kapow Records, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836, www.kapowrecords.com

Allergic To Whores – Life Through Death's Eyes, CD

Blaaaah. Automatic negative points for the terrible band name. What are we, fifth grade boys? Anyway, this is a poorly recorded yet energetically executed fast, sludgy, hardcore punk record with an old-school feel. Very heartfelt lyrics. Minor Threat-ish. An OK attempt at punk-rock recording. Just change the band name. (MG)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

* ATW – 1331 Chaos Before Death, CDEP

ATW (a.k.a. Allergic To Whores) is a damn fine harder-edged punk trio with a serious dark streak. All of the songs (except for the piano-driven instrumental title track) on this 12-minute seven-song EP are no frills, melodic, headbanger tunes that you can sing along to. Augmented by the group's efficient, if not entirely groundbreaking, use of dramatic loud/soft dynamic shifts, vocalist/guitarist Ray chants his tales of alienation, repentance, death and rebirth in a raspy yelp, similar to that of Slayer's Tom Araya. Memorable choruses, economical, single-note guitar leads, convincingly communicated raw emotion and all-around strong songwriting combine to make this a great punk-rock record. (AJ)

Dark Front Records, PO Box 291, St. Charles, MO 63302-0291, www.darkfront.com

Alpha Control Group, The – S/T, 7"

Rhythmically driven indie rock with winding guitar lines, quirky time changes, and cool synth bleats. Reminds me of some of the stuff Dischord has been putting out lately—and not just because of lyrics like "when we breathe deep it's 'cause we could use the oxygen." I dig this. (JC)

Hope Records, PO Box 77154, Pittsburgh PA 15213, www.hoperecords.com; Hard Travelin' Records, PO Box 8151, Pittsburgh PA 15217

* Amanda Woodward – Pleine De Grace, 7"

Ah yes. I have once again been blessed with a release by France's Amanda Woodward. This release picks up where the *Ultramort* CD left off. They have a sound that's similar to Four Hundred Years, with lots of shouted vocals and guitars that shift from quiet to loud, except they occasionally add a little dub influence in the mix. Amanda Woodward are definitely one of the more interesting and talented bands around right

now. I can only hope they tour the States with Yage sometime soon. If anyone is interested, these guys just reissued their demo as a 10" picture disc, and it's just as awesome as the 7" and *Ultramort* CD. (KM)

Code of Ethics, 10101 Orange Ranch, Tucson, AZ 85742

* Anatomy Of A Ghost – Evanesce, CD

Like the ghosts whose anatomies they claim to represent, these guys come and go with the eerie unpredictability of the supernatural. Their midtempo, soulful, chunkadelic songs are littered with starts and stops and abrupt tempo changes. It's like you're staring down Medusa, or perhaps you're the protagonist from the Nicholson Baker novel who can stop time. In any case, it's something different, and it makes for an exciting listening experience. Some of the tortured vocals and moody music has a horror-movie feel to it, like Anatomy Of A Ghost is beezlebug's favorite emo band. Except instead of wearing indie-rock glasses, they wear executioner's hoods, and instead of weeping as they fill their diaries with break-up rants, they stir their pot of boiling children. There are even some guitar riffs toward the end that carry a faint whiff of Randy Rhodes. (DAL)

Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

* Applesseed Cast – Two Conversations, CD

I thought that I'd heard this band before and didn't like them. Maybe I did. Maybe they've gotten a lot better. Maybe I'm not feeling myself lately. But I like this. The Applesseed Cast basically plays pleasant indie rock, but there's something very dynamic about it that draws you in. The arrangements are lush and thick without being overpowering. There are subtle keyboard sounds that fill in the background most of the time while the guitars build to mellow, pop rhythms. The singer has good, melodic voice, and I like his storytelling-style lyrics. I don't have the lyrics, but it almost seems like each song is a chapter from a book or a scene to a movie. There's something about this album that sounds like it's a soundtrack to something. At times they almost remind me of another Deep Elm expatriate, Pop Unknown—not so much in identical sounds, but in their skill with invoking moods. Maybe leaving that label causes you to improve. (NS)

Tiger Style, 401 Broadway, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10013-3005, www.tigerstylerecords.com

Araby – Your Wate And Fate, CD

Skillful indie rock along the lines of Sunny Day Real Estate or Mock Orange. The singer has a similar, expressive voice. Layered vocals,



intricate dual guitars and calm melodies. There's a lot going on musically, yet there's still a relaxing quality to it all. Good stuff. (NS)
Curve Of The Earth, 1312 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02115, www.curveoftheearthrecords.com

*** Arcade – Into The Light, CD**

To quote Tim Robbins in *The Hudsucker Proxy*: "A Muncie girl!" Four of them, to be exact, and they play textured, moody indie rock. This Indiana band is unpredictable, and they manage to sound comfortable in the genre without being stale. Are you bobbing your head because of the catchy riffs or because of the oppressive weight of the big sonic ideas? Who knows? But that's a good place to be, caught between a-rockin' and a-thinkin'. Their willingness to take risks and turn a poppy song inside out and give it a bridge from outer space and a sampled tape-loop break is admirable. Sometimes this tendency means they abandon promising sections quickly and jump around too much, and so the record has an impatient quality. (DAL)

Self-released, www.arcadetheband.com

Armor For Sleep – Dream To Make Believe, CD

These guys are close, but not quite there. Emo-tinged postpunk that leans heavily Sunny Day Real Estate's load-bearing wall. The music's pretty good, but the vocals really got on my nerves after awhile. Of all the emo clichés, whiney vocals is the most unforgivable, and they damn this record. (KR)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14 Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

Astro Zombies A.D. – Mutants At Mosa Trajectum, CD

Members of Right Direction and Backfire! enlist the help of a number of lead vocalists, including some of Europe's finest, on this tribute to the Misfits and Danzig. The 10 Misfit and two Danzig covers stay pretty faithful to the originals, but the alternating lead vocalists helps spice things up. (BN)

Gangstyle Records, Ecrevissestraat 41, 6125 AW Obbicht, the Netherlands, www.gangstylerecords.com

Avril, Fred – That Horse Must Be Starving, CD

Mellow and veering toward adult contemporary, *That Horse* is at times beat heavy and smooth, but suffers from taking itself too damn seriously. Sure to be used in an upcoming Volkswagen or Ikea commercial. (JG)

Pias Music, www.pias.com

Babe In The Woods – Blood Flows Under Snows, CD

Ryan Batkie of Abe Froman playing country-fied singer-songwriter stuff on acoustic guitar. Lyrics refer to "the barn" and "that road" and other hillbilly topics. Great for the coffeehouse/university student center set, though maybe not anybody who would buy a magazine with "Punk" in its name. (JC)

Friends & Relatives Records, PO Box 23, Bloomington IN 47402

Bardo Pond – On The Ellipse, CD

"Atmospheric" and "moody" only begin to describe these six songs. Bardo Pond plays what could be called "drone rock," but without a negative connotation. Songs lurch and sway while drums lope, wahed out guitars churn, and ephemeral vocals float in and out. Buy this if it's cheaper than drugs. (RR)

Touch & Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, www.tgrec.com

Barefoot – Only Souvenirs, CD

Sure to quench your thirst for poppy goodness, these Scotsmen bring 10 pop anthems to you. The music consists of mid- to fast-tempo punky pop filled with catchy hooks, vocal harmonies and charmingly sappy lyrics that fill the void I've had for this type mushy yet upbeat goodness. (TK)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Beat Happening – Music To Climb The Apple Tree By, CD

Listening to this awesome compilation of Beat Happening tunes from 1984-2000 is akin to watching your favorite high-school art school

teachers smoking dope at a Dead Milkmen show: surreal, nostalgic and touched with the virginal scent of school-supplies. Deadpan humor at its best. A wonderful, "I don't care" kind of thing. (SP)

K Records, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA, 98507, www.krecs.com

Beauty Pill – You Are Right To Be Afraid, CDEP

This lineup of Beauty Pill is different then on their first split CDEP on Dischord/Desoto. This five-song teaser for an upcoming full-length uses its time to showcase the slow, beautiful voice of Rachel Burke. Only one song rocks out a little more. (EA)

Dischord, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington D.C. 20007, www.dischord.com

*** Beehive And The Barracudas – In Dark Love, CD**

This rhythm-soaked rock super group, featuring members of Rocket From The Crypt, PeeChees and Red Aunts, rocks on every track. If that isn't a big enough selling point for you, let me assure you that they can rock! Relying heavily on percussion and using things like whistles and congas along with synths and the standard rock instruments, they easily avoid sounding cliché. The nicely placed rhythm guitars have an surprising hook that caught me off guard on most of the tracks. It is a bit on the "artsy" side at times, but not enough to turn hardcore rock 'n' roll fans off entirely. (TK)

Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, www.swamirecords.com


Beggarz – Days Come Easy, CD

A big, sprawling rock 'n' roll sound that has a heavy early Stones influence. The Beggarz is a name only; *Days Come Easy* is wholly singer/guitarist Adam Cassidy surrounded by a rotating list of studio musicians and players. The blues simplicity is great, but the songs tend to drag. (GBS)

Self-released, PO Box 154 Stn. C, Toronto, On, M6J 3M9, Canada, www.beggarz.com

Bill Boloby – The Revival, CD

Six tracks of formulated pop-garage that is clean, good fun. This is the kind of stuff that girlfriends (the sorority type) like because they can

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singalong and dance to it without spilling their beer. (EA)

Boloby's Medical Records, 221-H Foxtail Drive, West Palm Beach, FL 33415, www.billyboloby.com

Bitter Life Typecast, The / Elementary Thought Process – Split, 7"

The Bitter Life Typecast do one song of pleasant indie rock along the lines of older Midwest emo or Mineral: sung loudly and softly with lots of intricate guitar parts at varying intensities. Elementary Thought Process plays a more somber brand of indie rock with sort of shrill vocals. Pass. (NS)
Outreach, PO Box 436, Gilbertville, PA 19525, outreach_records@hotmail.com

Black Soul Choir – Cardinal, CDEP

If Revolution Summer had taken place in Memphis instead of DC, this might have been the output. These guys play post-hardcore infused with some down-home soul elements. The singer's howl is akin to Guy from Rites Of Spring, and the music goes from off kilter to driving to soulful effortlessly. (NS)
Init, PO Box 3432, Mankato, MN 56002, www.initrecords.com

Bleeding Hickeys, The – S/T, 7"

Mixing old-school garage rock and dirty pop punk isn't anything new, but the Bleeding Hickeys sure have a knack for doing it well. Big guitars, female vocals, simple melodies and four tracks to sing along to, all on a nice red vinyl release. (BN)
Self-released, www.visi.com/~seng/bleedinghickies/, bleedinghickies@yahoo.com

Bobby Birdman – Heart Caves, CDEP

One man and his computer, playing a very lovely and unique style of glitchy electronic music with a singer/songwriter appeal. Smooth and glammed up vocals soar over a tiny symphony of layered sounds. It reminds me of Stephen Merritt/Magnetic Fields, but in a lo-fi, minimal, more folksy kind of way. (MG)
States Rights Records, 5802 N. Kerby Ave., Portland, OR 97217, www.statesrightsrecords.com

Bottom Of The Hudson – The Omaha Record, CD

Rambling folk-pop songs with electronic elements. Unfortunately this guy's voice sounds too much like the singer of Crash Test Dummies, and inevitably the "MmmMmmMmm" song sneaks into my head. Once you get past that, however, this is a catchy little release. (JG)
Absolutely Kosher Records, 1412 10th St., Berkeley, CA 94710-542, www.absolutelykosher.com

Born From Pain – Sands Of Time, CD

Fans of Hatebreed take note: There is yet another band that is ready and willing to sound just like 'em, only with less vocal intensity. There is a fan base out there for it, but I'm not interested. (TK)
Gangstyle Records, Ecrivissestraat 41, 6125 AW Obbicht, The Netherlands, www.gangstylerecords.com

Bottom Line – No One's Safe, CDEP

Generic East Coast-style hardcore. This band tries really hard to sound tough, but the effort shines through more than the songs themselves. Also, Bottom Line suffers from thin production, which does not lend itself to this style of music. Maybe a full-length will steer them in the right direction. (DH)
Stab and Kill Records, PO Box 52084, Boston, MA 02205, www.stabandkill.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

THE VIKINGS, *Go Berserk*. Sit down with me, and I will tell you why the Devil Dogs' *Saturday Night Fever* may be the best LP of all time, but I've already written about that. Now it's time to introduce the second best record to come out in the past 10 years: The Vikings' *Go Berserk*, featuring members of the Devil Dogs, Turbonegro and the Yum Yums. The band originally formed in Norway as a Devil Dogs cover band and featured an original member who frequented the country to be with his future wife. The group wasn't really ever a band in the real sense, but managed to play in Norway and record a slew of stuff written for their other bands and covers ranging from Joan Jett, Bobby Fuller, Nervous Eaters, Boys, Bay City Rollers, Cheap Trick, etc. Most of you won't know the covers from the originals, because they blend in so well. In fact many of the originals sound like covers; you sing along the first time wondering where you have heard it before. The recording is super clean, and collectors will appreciate the covers and love this on the first spin. It's an instant classic. The compact disc has their first two singles on it, so go that route, if for nothing more than the cover of the Fun Things "Savage." Listening to this right now, I can honestly say that it's amazing these boys didn't play together for years to create the tight sound they laid down.

Currently I have been listening to the Exploding Hearts LP and singles as a tribute to their tragedy. You should pick up Firestarter's newest as well (ex-Teengenerate).

Bouncing Souls, The – Anchors Aweigh, CD

Anthem, nostalgic, melodic punk rock like the Souls have always rocked. Greg's voice still soars and descends like the hopeless romantic he has always been, and the band is as tight as ever. Really, there are no surprises on *Anchors Aweigh*, but damn it's good. (GBS)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Brand New – Deja Entendu, CD

Boring emo wank with lots of quiet parts and the requisite sing-along choruses. Long-winded songs that go nowhere and keep on going. The last song is acoustic, naturally, but I imagine they have acoustic arrangements worked out for all the others in anticipation of that call from MTV Unplugged. (JC)
Triple Crown Records, 331 W 57th St #472, NY, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Brat – We Are The Rockingest, CD

I detected a slight Biggie Smalls influence in the way they rhyme a succession of single words. Making that connection gave me more pleasure than listening to this collection of spare, amateurish stabs at pop songs bulldozed with grating, motormouth "I'm so clever" vocals. (DAL)
Killdeer, PO Box 260188, Madison, WI 53726, www.killdeerrecords.com

Bread And Water – Everything So Far, CD

Thirty tracks of melodic HxC compiling their self-titled LP, two singles and two split singles. The vocalist, Aime, has a powerful female front while belting out personal and political songs about general rights of all living things. (EA)
Bread and Water, PO Box 595264, Dallas, TX 75359-5264, www.bread-and-water.com

Breather Resist – Only In The Morning, CD

Crushing noise-core featuring a member of Black Cross and National Acrobat. Lots of heavy guitars, thick bass and pounding drums, all convulsing in unison. Meanwhile, the vocals bellow and wail. You can pretty much expect quality hardcore from Deathwish, and this is no exception. (NS)
Deathwish Records, 10 Lothrop St., Beverly, MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

Broadcast – Ha Ha Sound, CD

Ethereal and maddening, Broadcast's first LP in three years pales in comparison to some of their first recordings. But Trish Keenan's child-like vocals chime nicely with the band's ambient instrumentation, and several tracks are reminiscent of Stereolab or The Rosaries. Broadcast shines when it's not trying so hard to sound so cute. (JG)
Warp Records, www.warprecords.com

Bronwyn – Through The Fog, Through The Pines, CD

Whimsical indie rock with noted inspirations from relatively gigantic stars as Cat Power, Mary Timony and Smog. The ladies' voices run the gamut from gentle and quiet to gentle and loud. Backed by quirky electric guitars, the effect is mesmerizing in a folkish way, not far off from Ida's simple charm. (SP)
Greyday Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208-2086, www.greydayproductions.com

*** Burn Your Bridges – S/T, CD**

Burn Your Bridges is an excellent Burbank power-violence band with great lyrics. Actually, I can't say for certain that they'd deem themselves a power-violence band, but musically they seem to fit that sect of hardcore better than any other. Many of the songs deal with punk hypocrisies, but in an entertaining way that is never overly serious or negative. One lyric states that "any band who sells their merch for above their cost is a capitalist pig/ I'm telling everyone about it right after I check on my eBay bids," and another discusses the ironies of hitching a car ride to a show at night after riding a bike with Critical Mass in the afternoon. There's also a song called "Shut Up And Play," which is one of those antipolitical rants more common in genres that tend to attract fewer socially minded types. Burn Your Bridges is the perfect band for people that don't fit in with today's anarchist punk movement, but thrive on some of today's new hard-core sounds. Also available on vinyl, this album is as good as the hardcore of today gets. (AE)

Deep Six Records, PO Box 6911, Burbank, CA 91510, www.deepsixrecords.com

*** Calibretto – Dead By Dawn, CD**

I'll start by saying that I love this CD. It hits on the best aspects of the Violent Femmes and Nick Cave while maintaining a sense of originality. The seven songs (two of them really sinister-sounding instrumentals) are particularly well written, lyrics and all. Getting the album title from one of my favorite movies of all time, *Evil Dead 2*, just adds to their likeability. That's when I did some research to find more stuff from this amazing band. The amount of disappointment that followed my curiosity was tremendous. Having changed their name from Calibretto13, they had released three prior albums on Tooth And Nail Records. The lyrics on these albums were horrible Christian ranting drivel, and they didn't sound nearly as original as they do on this new release. Then my disappointment turned into hopefulness, because I think it's commendable that a band would leave the money of a semi-major indie label for a smaller indie label, especially when they have improved on their sound so much. I believe they did the right thing, and I implore anyone with an interest in dark lyrical humor and music that is catchy and eerie at the same time to support this band. (TK)

Standard Recording Company, PO Box 827, Kokomo, IN 46903-0827, www.standardrecording.com

Camarosmith – S/T, CD

Fuzzy guitars, Scott Weiland-ish lead vocals and an over-the-top cock-rock aura sum up Camarosmith's 13-track debut. Their sound is nothing original, and their heads are unjustifiably swollen, but these guys would be fun to see live at a dive bar in the boonies and after a six-pack of PBR. (EG)

Dead Teenager Records, PO Box 470153, San Francisco, CA 94147-0153, www.deadteenager.net

Cancerslug / County Z

Cancerslug – Alabama Bloodbath, CD

Slow songs about graveyards and fast songs about blood. Eighteen scary numbers in all that actually have a decent throwback sound to early metal and punk, with the basic chunky guitar riffs and melodic, dark singing. Cool stuff, and it's just in time for Halloween. (BC)

Valiant Death Records, 3337 Popular Drive, Smithfield, VA 23430, www.valiantdeath.com

Canine Sugar – Goes For A Walk, CD

All things cute and cuddly rear from Canine Sugar's eponymous *Goes For A Walk*. The material is so saccharine that, as a listener, you feel sticky sweet all over. Hoards of short, light, poppy pieces about the good things in life: love, summer, rainbows, fried rice and Mama Cass. (EG)

Friends and Relatives Records, PO Box 23, Bloomington, IN 47402, friendsandrelatives-records@yahoo.com

*** Cat On Form – Structure And Fear, CD**

OK, Cat On Form is tops. Part hard-core, part good ol' classic punk singed with a cuppa riot grrrrr, this English band likes to wax crazed on politics, capitalism and kids getting brainwashed by corporate media. The lyrics, while not elevated prose, are pungent enough to get the band's acidic message across: "They teach us fucked up shit/ Like how to move and tick/ And there's no warning signs/ For old respected minds." The music is mostly high-speed noise and occasionally thoughtfully mellow. The band's (two girls and two guys) vocalists like to scream incoherently and play off each other in a sort of call-and-response way, further digging out the communal feel of the group. This is a great band with a lot of smart things to say. (SP)

Southern Records, PO Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657, www.southern.com

Cave In – Anchor, 7"

What would make this bands' new sound pretty awesome is if they went back to their original metal sound. I do not like this post-metal Cave In: alternative rock music (Foo Fighters) with silly Led Zeppelin parts. Bring back the brutality, please. (MG)

Magic Bullet Records, PO Box 2370, Merrifield, VA 22116, www.magicbulletrecords.com

C.D. Truth – Chemically Dependent, CD

This CD title makes me think these guys met at an AA meeting. They call themselves "Akron, Ohio's proudest citizens," and included "Follow Me To Akron" as a testament to their hometown pride. Kind of snotty vocals over prog-rocky punk rock. A nice change from the monotony of three-chord power-pop crap. (JG)

Self-released, www.geocities.com/limpakron

Charge 69 – Des Mots, Des Rires, Des Larmes Et Des Pleurs..., 12"

If you ever wondered how some of the classic, old-school street-punk bands would have sounded singing in French, this is your answer. No translated lyric sheet was provided, but I'm pretty sure the songs describe political and social problems and include a number of blue-collar street-punk anthems. (BN)

Dirty Faces Schallplatten, Universitätsstr 16, 44789 Bochum, Germany, www.dirtyfaces.de

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie(AA)

DARLINGTON, *Girltroversy*. I'm going to admit something that may not be too popular with the kids: I'm not a huge fan of either The Queers or Screaming Weasel. There, I said it. Keep your Chuck Taylors on—you needn't pelt the humble reviewer with shoes. I shall redeem and defend myself by writing freely of my abnormal obsession with Darlington, a poppy-post-pop-punk band. In the scheme of pop-punk life, Joey Ramone was our gentle Poppa, Joe Queer is our perverted uncle and Christy Brigitte Darlington is our tattooed, scare-your-ma-to-death boyfriend. With two full sleeves, a penchant for wearing a cheerleader's uniform and his love for pink glitter, you can't resist him or his super-sugary-sappy, self-deprecating punk rock odes to all things retarded. *Girltroversy* is inane ("Buttinski," "Judy Jetson"), unabashedly fun ("Sugar Fix") and surprisingly dreamy ("Love," "Espresso"). Yep, *dreamy*. I'm not sure how many times Joe or Ben have been referred to as "dreamy," but I bet that number is limited. Christy's charm is most apparent in "Infection," a snotty song where he wants to be "the puss-y discharge from your fake tits." *Swoon*. Are you in love yet? If not, now you can start chucking your All-Star hi-tops at me.

Weapons of ass gyration: Mirah Yom Tov Zeitlyn, Ginger Brooks Takahashi & Friends, *Songs From The Black Mountain Music Project* (reviewed below); The Weakerthans, *Left And Leaving*, Darlington, *Mess You Up*, and The Specials, *S/T*.

Chinese Girls – OYTR, 7"

I'm not too familiar with this style of music, but the b-side is a Velvet Underground cover, and the VU has definitely inspired these guys. It's sort of dreamy, poppy and full of guitar fuzz. Nice, but not noteworthy. (KM)

Max Recordings, 715 North Jackson, Little Rock, AR 72205, www.maxrecordings.com

Chordvets – S/T, 7"

Chordvets is a fun, lightweight Japanese girl-pop band, with a hearty, lo-fi '60s garage-rock vibe. I Don't Feel A Thing is a bold record label, releasing a band this soft along with brutally hard bands like Memento Mori. More labels should be so bold. (AE)

I Don't Feel A Thing!, PO Box 858, Tempe, AZ 85280, www.idontfeelathing.com

Cinema Eye, The / Audion – split, CD

Two songs from two similar-sounding bands that have a neat schtick—call it cyberangst in a minor key. Dark and heavy with a touch of electronica, it moves fast, and the vocalists cut loose. (DAL)

Sound Virus, PO Box 55783, Valencia, CA 91385, www.sound-virus.com

Civil Defense – S/T, CDEP

Raw, pissed off old school hardcore. Dual vocalists shout and scream over fast power chords pounding rhythms. Lots of lyrics attacking the scene and lots of repetitive singalongs. Nothing much new, but genuinely angry and aggressive. Ex-members of Intent To Injure and Roswell. (NS)

Striving For Togetherness, Schlossparkstr. 5, 95145 Oberkotzau, Germany, stfrecords@web.de

Clarity Process – Fluid, CD

Yet another one of those "sometimes I'm singing, sometimes I'm screaming" emo-core bands. I'll tell you, when I saw Poison The Well play in front of 20 kids, I never thought that this would be the next big thing. Some interesting guitar work, but it's barely there. (DH)

Rise Records, PO Box 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

Clorox Girls – S/T, 7"

Yeah! Cool, raunchy garage punk. What the songs lack in originality, they make up for in snotty, pissy aggression. The lyrics, which deal with familiar teenage subjects like boredom, drugs and contempt for authority figures, mesh well with the "bash away until it sounds cool," rock 'n' roll ethic at work here. (AJ)

Jonny Cat Records, PO Box 82428, Portland, OR 97278

Cobs, The – Fatal But Not Serious, CD

Fast-paced Chicago punk with raspy vocals that at times recall early Jawbreaker, though a bit easier on the vocab. Sometimes poppy, always sloppy and certainly a bit goofy. The Cobs are good fun and leave me something to look forward to. (PS)

Self-released, www.thecobs.com

Comets On Fire – S/T, CD

Psychedelic, spacey, sludgy punk rock. Think fuzzed-out guitars, pounding drum beats, howling, indiscernible vocals and odd raygun noises. Then think old Mudhoney, MCS or Blue Cheer. The tempos are upbeat and make you want to put on some flairs and shake your ass. Definitely a rockin' and unique band. (NS)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Commercials, The – It's Not What You Say...It's How You Say It, CD

Apparently, saying your music is a blend of melodic hardcore and indie sensibilities (whatever that means) is just an excuse for sounding like a thousand other bands. Call it emo if you want—I just call it more pseudo-sensitive songs about girls and heartbreak. Wake me when it's over. (CC)

Blackout! Records, 931 Madison St., Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.blackoutrecords.com

Community Service Project, The – Process Of Illumination, CD

Melodic punk with screeching vocals—at times a hardcore bark—the Community Service Project sings a lot about relationships and ladies. Musically, they stray little from melodic pop punk and early pop emo formulas. (GBS)

Self-released, 430 Lenox Ave., East Patchogue, NY 11772

Condition / Fed Up – split, 7"

Condition are patriotic hard-core aficionados, but I'm not sure what they're so angry about. Their lyrics are really vague. Fed Up lean toward putting metal into your punk, but the drums sound like they were recorded using an old cassette deck. The horrible recording ruined everything. (EA)

Self-released, www.conditionnyhc.com, www.angelfire.com/on2/fedup

Connect Four Orchestra – Chisel to the Hip, CD

These Dubliners would probably hate to be tagged with the instrumental indie post-rock label, but *too bad*, they're getting it. Consistently similar to Pele, these warm tunes jam with more accessibility than Tortoise and rarely challenge the listener further than an occasionally engaging tempo change. (VC)

Red F Records, www.redfrecords.com

Corn Crop & The Seven Donkeys – Hey Pop!, 7"

Two bluesy songs here: One is very hard and pounding and almost industrial sounding, the other is a slower and sloppier Tom Waits-ish tune. Interesting. (MG)

Mungler Winslowe, PO Box 150671, Brooklyn, NY 11215-0671, www.munglerwinslowe.com

County Z – Graveyards And Grocery Carts, 12"

So I've heard both of the sides of this LP twice now and I still don't know what to make of it. Imagine a violin and a trumpet played against an unsettled background of aggressive drumming, a bass guitar and female vocals. OK, I'm still not sure what to think. (BN)

TRD W/D Records, PO Box 52096, LA 70152

**County Z / Impractical Cockpit – split, 7"**

Impractical Cockpit are spastic nerds playing punk, and it's just plain awkward. But County Z's punk jabs and jumps with violin and robotic lead vocals. A little obnoxious, but so bizarre it's intriguing. (CC)

Raw Sugar Records, PO Box 53011, New Orleans, LA 70153

Crash – Young Boy I Can Help You Through Your Exams, CD

Melodic, poppy, emo-punk catchiness. These Norwegians have successfully cracked the American-bred emo-pop code developed by bands like the Get Up Kids and Jimmy Eat World. Those who enjoy such sounds will enjoy this. (MG)

Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179, London E17 5FE, UK, www.fireflyrecordings.com

Crashcart – Sleepers Awake, CD

Nice, poppy emo-type stuff. You know the kind: rockin', melodic and poppy, but not skimping on the distorted channel in their amps. It can be a pleasing assortment, but a lot of bands do this. Crashcart is better than most, so they're a better-tasting fish in a huge pond. (KR)

Slow Gun Records, 3365 E. Miraloma Ave., #206, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.slowgun-records.com

*** Criteria – En Garde, CD**

OK, so I see the cover of this record, a shot of singer/guitarist Stephen Pedersen in cords and a weird jacket, holding his guitar, and I think: Oh Christ. My roommate quips, "Oh, get ready for some songs with *feeling*." Resigned to the emo I expected, I slipped it in my computer and was blown away. My Bad Emo Paranoia was completely unjustified: This is excellent Saddle Creek-style post-punk, quirky and complex, not just straight-up rock. The opener, "The Coincidence," features an unbelievably catchy bit of noodly guitar work and a chorus that smokes. Pedersen was in Cursive and The White Octave, so my comparisons to Cursive, Burning Airlines, Q and Not U and Built To Spill feel pretty dead-on. Expect riffage ("Talk In A Crowded Room"), noodles ("Me On Your Front Porch"), lots of power ("It Happens"), great vocals (often lightly distorted) and just a solid all-around package. My friends, can I get an "amen"? (KR)

Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Czolgosz – Saipan, 7"

Political music rarely works if artists aren't able to be specific with their ire. Czolgosz understands this. They deliver slightly off-kilter political hardcore reminiscent of Feederz and Dead Kennedys. There's a little first EP TSOL in them as well, especially singer Vertigo's voice and delivery. (RR)

Rodent Popside Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopside.com

Dame Darcy – Greatest Hits, CD

Dame Darcy's murder ballads and sea shanties are the soundtrack for a surreal dream where she's the narrator, voice creeping through in waves of sublime eeriness. Her sound (banjo, violin, xylophone) is part carnival/part funeral, creating a bizarre symphony that's a tribute to the darkness in the music of myths. (CC)

Bop Tart Records, www.boptart.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

MAXIMILIAN COLBY, *Discography*. Right at the hump of the '90s, Richmond, Va., seemed like the place to be. Bands like Avail and Action Patrol were bludgeoning a new brand of punk and putting their scene on the map. Among these peers was the incredibly brilliant Maximilian Colby. Before "screamo" knew it existed, the often overlooked, but not yet forgotten Max Colby were pounding out their meticulously tightly wound discordant noise to unsuspecting basement crowds. Bands today carry the sound in short, scathing bursts of chaotic noise (played by wimpy white kids having temper tantrums), but Max Colby mastered sharp control, stop/start tempos, and polarizing dynamics. Max Colby came to me via my first mixtape, bookmarking a place between Assfactor 4 and Moss Icon. "Last Name" reversed itself over and over again in my Walkman while riding the yellow bus to and from school every day. The discography covers their unfortunately brief existence, cut short when the bassist suddenly died, forcing a deep wound into his peers—and marking the title of Avail's 4 A.M. *Friday* and the song "F.C.A." The band went on with ex-members forming The Sleepytime Trio, who were more refined and popular, but just as brief.

*** Danny And The Nightmares – The End Is Near Again, CDEP**

In many cases, messy, noisy, poorly played punk can provide an extremely entertaining musical experience for listeners. This, however, isn't one of those cases. This record is just plain bad, but I'd bet money that there's some philosophy major up in Olympia who thinks this is the best shit since Beat Happening. Danny, the singer (use the term loosely), sounds like an effeminate, mentally challenged acid burnout. He whines on and on about hippie love crap and Jesus and ghosts and Lord knows what, over generic, semispooky guitars and drums on every single track. Proof positive that some level of actual talent and musicianship is necessary to play punk. (AJ)

Cool Beans Records, 3181 Mission #113, San Francisco, CA 94110, www.coolbeans.com

Darediablo – Feeding Frenzy, CD

Bass-guitar sales must be plummeting in New York. Darediablo is a drum, guitar and organ instrumental trio. Rarely will an instrumental band more than faint praise like "interesting" or "good for what they are," but Darediablo certainly have potential. They exercise musical muscle, but manage to stay within the groove. (RR)

Southern Records, PO Box 577375 Chicago, IL 60657, www.southern.com

Darlington / Johnie 3 – split, 7"

Darlington's two songs contain your basic, happy, poppy punk sound and Johnie 3's two are similar. Darlington may have the better melodic-guitar riffs, but the best lyric goes the Johnie 3 with "If I was a girl/I'd touch my own tit." Classic. (BC)

Wide Stance Records 1233 Redtail Hawk #4, Youngstown, OH 44512
www.stardumbrecords.com

Davis, Paul Matthew – No Shoes, No Shirt, No Skinny Ties, CD

Tom Waits-like desperate musings about drinking your sorrows away. The strong country influences sparkle brightly over the duration of the 12 acoustic performances. There is something incredibly endearing in Paul's lyrics and performance. "Drinking In The Park" and "Falling Star" are worth the price of admission alone. (BN)

Warning Sign Records, PO Box 4849, Crestline, CA 92325, www.warning-signrecords.com

Dead Like Dallas – The Great Midwestern Tragedy, CD

The band's name, a nod to S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, couldn't be more appropriate. Beautiful and sad music with loud and soft spots full of self-loathing and regret. A good soundtrack for nursing break ups or losing friends. (JG)

Self-released, www.deadlikedallas.com

Deadweight, The – Stroking The Moon, CD

The gimmick here is that the band's instrumentation is violin, cello and drums, which elicits an initial, "Oh, cool!" reaction. But their unoriginal, funk-rock sound doesn't hold up. They're obviously talented musicians, but they simply can't write a song that sticks in your head. (AJ)

Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Death Before Dishonor / Nourish The Flame – Taking It Back, split CD

I guess this is two different bands. They both play chunky, East Coast style metal-core with hoarse vocals and gang backups. But there is some melody among the mosh. Lyrically, Nourish The Flame is more about taking on the outside world, while Death Before Dishonor deals with pain and depression. (NS)

Spook City, PO Box 34891, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.spookcityusa.com

*** Death On Wednesday – Songs to _____ To, CDEP**

A very nice collection of five songs from this up-and-coming rock outfit from SoCal. It is nice every once in a while to hear singing instead of yelling. Often bands will have a singer who doesn't really sing at all, if you know what I mean. This guy lends some emotion to it and really puts his vocals on the line, from the acoustic guitar and vocals on "Sympathy" to the full-band onslaught of songs like "Simple Life." It's recorded and mastered by some of the biggest names in California, which means this band knows people in high places, which could help them get big and on MTV and all that crap. It is a shame punk and rock are way over-commercialized. Everyone is in a band nowadays, and ones like these, who are actually talented and seem to know how to write some damn fine rock 'n' roll, will probably will get lost in the shuffle. (BC)

Sidecho Records 1215 N. Red Gum Suite L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.sidecho.com

*** Delafields, The – S/T, CD**

Proof that punk is about more than distortion and discontent. This is sweetly haunting, note-perfect cowboy music. These guys are a Chicago fixture who have built up a reputation by playing regular gigs at their neighborhood bar, Simon's Tavern. But you would never know they were from the *Punk Planet* City (also known as the Windy City, the City of the Broad Shoulders and other lesser such noms de plume) because they do such a fine job evoking the western states. The vocalist is blessed with the ideal alt-country voice, a subtle twang that anchors enough understated emotion to fill a hundred miles of wide-open prairie. It takes real talent to glide between heartbreak and honky tonk, and these guys pull it off beautifully. (DAL)

Self-released, www.thedelafields.com

Destruction Made Simple – Terror Stricken Youth, CD

Destruction Made Simple scream fast-paced hardcore for 12 tracks. Most songs last around two minutes or so. Nothing different or done well enough to warrant any excitement. They did hide a track on the last song, so there's about six minutes of annoying silence. (EA)

A-F Records, PO Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.a-frecords.com

Dirty Charlie – S/T, 7"

More generic, female-fronted hardcore. Dirty Charlie squeeze nine tracks onto this single with very cool handmade sleeves. This will mean a lot to someone who hasn't gone down this path before. It is hard to get excited when you have been there, done that. (EA)

Raw Sugar Records, PO Box 53011, New Orleans, LA 70153

Dirty Power / Elad Love Affair

Dirty Power - S/T, CD

Pansy Division rules, so it's entirely unforeseen to hear Pansy Division's guitarist Patrick Goodwin being responsible for this abysmal glam-metal full-length. This 11-song CD is 11 songs too long. I'd rather set my pubes on fire than listen to this pathetic mess of an experiment again. (AE)

Dead Teenager Records, PO Box 470153, San Francisco, CA 94147-0153, www.deadteenager.net

* Dirty Water - S/T, CDEP

Three former members of the popular east coast '90s band The Ducky Boys are back with this stunning debut EP. The band's motto is "NO IMAGE, NO GIMMICK, NO BULLSHIT," which arguably is a motto that itself tends toward gimmickry. But the band's lyrics probe the shortcomings of punk subcultures in an interesting and sophisticated manner. Dirty Water focuses on the false senses of community that people with incongruent attitudes and rationales for hanging out in punk circles strive for, and how that striving can lead to disappointment and self-destruction for too many kids. It's an unusually somber EP for a streetpunk release, and lyrically it might be too morose for some fans of the genre. But if melodic, midtempo streetpunk is your bag, Dirty Water's an excellent new addition to the scene. (AE)

Street Anthem Records, 6201 15th Ave. NW, #B306, Seattle, WA 98107-2382, www.streetanthemrecords.com

Disband - In Small Rooms, CD

Disband sounds particularly similar to The Dismemberment Plan with their rhythmic indie rock. At times, I have to admit, I like them even more than the Plan. I did stumble onto their web site and found a really funny video for the second track, "Dimmer," that everyone should check out. (TK)

Ernest Jenning Record Co., 68 Cheever Pl. Apt. 2., Brooklyn, NY 11231, www.ernestjenning.com

* Dispensing Of False Halos - With Prayers And A Scalpel, CD

I was all prepared to give these guys a decent review. Their style stands as average midtempo screamo with lyrics ranging from angry to whiny. There is nothing that really sticks out about them, but they are far from being a shitty band. That was at least until I heard the downright offensive attempt at hip-hop on the hidden track. "515, that's how we're livin', 515, yeah we representin'" is the chorus—everyone who was involved in the production of this horrendous creation should be beat down in the 515. (TK)

Init Records, PO Box 3432, Mankato, MN 56002-3432, www.initrecords.net

Don't Look Down - Five, CDEP

It pains me to say it, but this is precisely the type of band that gets Warped Tour bands branded as generic. There's nothing going on here other than the rote motions of sickly sweet harmonies backed by fast, heavy guitars. (AE)

Nitro Records, 7071 Warner Ave. Suite F736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.nitrorecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Carla Costa (CC)

THE VASELINES, *The Way of the Vaselines: A Complete History*. Before there were those wimps Belle and Sebastian, Scotland had makers of pop tunes for those who weren't just *feeling* sinister. Persuasively naughty and wickedly spry, The Vaselines were a band that worked in contradictions: laying fuzzed out guitars over a '60s pop tempo and timing; and covering Divine's "You Think You're A Man" alongside Christian Sunday school standard, "Jesus Wants Me For A Sunbeam." The off-kilter harmonies of Eugene Kelly and Frances McKee were, indeed, heavenly—if angels sang about sex, blasphemy and bitches. Existing for only two short years ('86-'88), The Vaselines were crystallized for all their verve and charm by their biggest fan, Kurt Cobain. Their grinding-motor-turned-jangly-love-romp, "Son Of A Gun," and the kissable "Molly's Lips" appeared on Nirvana's *Incesticide* in 1992. The same year, this collection was picked up and released by Sub Pop (when it still meant something to appear on that label). The sassy dichotomy of these deviant Scots is best captured on tracks like "Sex Sux (Amen)" or "Teenage Superstars," a song described by the band as being about "bed and Jesus Christ and mothers and boredom." Dirty! Dirty! And such sweet revenge for recovering Catholics. But you don't have to be one to appreciate The Vaselines' demonic pop. Pretty much anybody will love music for defiling virgins.

That's how I like it, baby: Bride of No No, S/T; FannyPack, *So Stylistic*; Glass Candy, *Love Love Love*; Goldfrapp, *Black Cherry*; Beyonce Knowles, *Dangerously In Love*.

* Door And The Window, The - Detailed Twang, CD

This compilation of The Door And The Window's tunes (ranging from 1979-1981) is a nice peephole into the originality and excitement of (what was then) a rather infantile musical movement. Most of the tracks consist of oddly mismatched sound-beats, often originating from a cheap synthesizer. The band, made up of four lovely English chaps with zero musical training or, one can argue, musical ability, innocently and wonderfully compose unpretentious songs with what could well be arrogant meanings. Titles such as "Part-Time Punks" and "Subculture Fashion Slaves" tell all. But rather than out-punking the punks, DTAW nicely incorporate experimental soundscapes with untraditional and unexpected lyrics. In "We Do Scare Each Other" for instance, boys and girls kill one another in acts of sexual love. Not quite an S&M thing, more of a bored political thing. If you enjoy early punk with tongue-in-cheek dry English humor, dig this one out. (SP)

Overground Records, PO Box 11NW, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE199 1NW, UK, www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

* Doughboys - La Majeure 1987, CDEP

During the late '80s, the Doughboys recorded a demo that quickly got them signed to Pipeline Records for their first LP, *Whatever*. These are three of the original tracks that were rerecorded for that album. Before they got all sorts of shitty alt-rock-sounding, these guys played some straight-up (punk) rock tunes. Bands like Doc Hopper and Sinkhole took inspiration from bands like the Doughboys, The Replacements and the Descendents to get that more melodic punk-rock sound down. Crunchy, upbeat guitars, popping bass lines and drums are matched by the scratchy, sneering vocals. Considering that this is one of their first recordings, the Doughboys were quite the band when they first started. Released as a three-song 7"/CD, this release is more of a teaser than anything else. However, it's really good stuff that will definitely get you fiending for more. You may even be inspired to track down their first LP. Enjoy—I know I am! (DM)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2 WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Down By Law - Windwardtidesandwaywardsails, CD

The umpteenth round of melodic punk rock from Dave Smalley and co. It's got a straight-up LA tone that's monotonous. Tributes to AC/DC, memories of getting stoned to Sublime and pleas for salvation from cartoons makes this record all the more disappointing. (GBS)

The Union Local 212, 78 Rachel E. Montreal, QC, H2W 1C6, Canada, www.unionlabgroup.com

Dragons, The - Sin Salvation, CD

Sin Salvation takes off like a Charger on the line and never lets up. Ferocious rock 'n' roll that has neither pretense of politics nor seems to be concerned with anything other than cranking the fuck out of their Marshall stacks. Another fine Gearhead release. (GBS)

Gearhead Records, PO Box 421219, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.gearheadrecords.com

Drive Faster - The Dream Is Over, CDEP

You get seven quality produced pop-punk anthems in the vein of Lagwagon here, with one of the few punk vocalists I've heard lately that could probably make it past a round or two on TV's *American Idol*. This EP is spirited and energetic enough to maintain respectability. (AE)

Bling Bling Records, 500 Clarendon St., Syracuse, NY 13210, www.blingblingrex.com

Drive Til Morning - S/T, CD

Drive Til Morning is the solo-project a former member of Pop Unknown. It's like a lot of one-man projects: a lot of experimentation with blips and bleeps, country, and pop. I didn't find this one essential, probably because the guy's voice reminds me of the singer from Crash Test Dummies. (KM)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deeplem.com

Driver Of The Year - Some Girls Would Say, CD

For the most part, Driver Of The Year successfully paints an eclectic musical portrait by blending '60s era r&b, California bubblegum pop and swaggering rock 'n' roll. There's a bit of uninteresting filler here, but "Sunburst Finish," "Rock N' Roll Revolution" and "Stuck Up Drunk" are definitely worth a listen. (AJ)

Future Appletree Records, PO Box 191 Davenport, IA 52805-0191, www.futureappletree.com

Duncan, Paul - To An Ambient Hollywood, CD

Inventive, lo-fi, home-recorded singer/songwriter fare. Layers of electronically produced sounds overlaid with bits of piano, drums, guitars and/or horns. Some songs are more guitar-based, but others seem to work more around soundscapes and loops and samples. Typically not my thing, but I really enjoyed the aching, sad melancholy of this record. (MG)

HomeTapes, 430 E. 50th St., Savannah, GA 31405, www.home-tapes.com

Dysrhythmia - Pretest, CD

"Prog-metal free-jazz fusion" would probably be the best and most confusing way to describe this band. Quirky and sparse-sounding, Dysrhythmia has managed to avoid pitfalls that other "jazz-metal" bands can sometimes fall into (bad arrangements and unnecessary, jazzy breaks). I bet this goes great with pot. (DH)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapserecords.com

Easpa Measa - S/T, CD

Dark, yet melodic, hardcore with tense political messages comparable to those of Oi Polloi and Wlochaty. Honest lyrics describe social, racial and political issues with often brutal poignancy. The screamed vocals really drive home the message contained in the lyrics. Strong release, though it's nothing new or essential. (BN)

Easpa Measa, 57 Woodview Lucan, Dublin, Ireland

Elad Love Affair - A Woman Gives Birth To A Gun And It Stabs Her, CD

If Bjork sang for an indie/hardcore band, this is what it might sound like—in a good way. The singer has an interesting voice with a lot of range, and the music is creative and forceful. Nice dual guitar interplay. I'm even digging the poetic lyrics. Six well-crafted songs. (NS)

Immigrant Sun, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11217, www.immigrantsun.com



Electric Turn To Me / Fear Before the March of Flames

Electric Turn To Me – S/T CDEP

Take a mind trip with the Electric Turn To Me's four-song freakout! Wobbly female vocals wrap around a pounding, keyboard-propelled bass, shrilling guitar and vintage organ melodies. German native Silke sounds like Karen O on downers. ETM would have been perfect at an Andy Warhol Factory party. (EG)

No Quarter, PO Box 42584, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.noquarter.com

Elliott – Song In The Air, CD

I've liked some of Elliott's releases in the past, but their continued musical growth is moving beyond me. Their newest CD is definitely richly textured and talented, but it's a little too droning and moody. Maybe it's the added use of keyboards and string instruments. I can see people enjoying this, just not me. (NS)

Revelation, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232 www.revelationrecords.com

Eluvium – Lament Material, CDEP

Eluvium is Matthew Cooper, a Southern gentleman with the knack for creating beautifully austere walls of ethereal sound. Lament Material will sweep you into a world where ear-candy collides with oceanic imagery and furtive whispers. So go on, dwell where the stars and mermaids dance—put Eluvium on today. (SP)

Temporary Residence, PO Box 11390, Portland, OR 97211, www.temporaryresidence.com

Embrace Today – Soldiers, CD

Now, I'm not straight edge, but I know what I like: pummeling Boston hardcore with Kurt Ballou's signature, slightly trashy, production that I love so much. Fifteen tracks, 22 minutes, no fucking around. Hey guys, when you're in town, I'll buy you all Cokes and tell you to keep up the good work. (DH)

Deathwish Records, 10 Iothrop St., Beverly, MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

End, The – Transfer Trachea Reverberations From Point: False Omniscent, CD

Chaotic metal that weaves in and out of time signatures like a cabbie trying to get a pregnant woman to the hospital. Almost too much to handle after a few tracks, but The End are able to keep it interesting enough that every time I think of turning it off, something changes. (DH)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapserecords.com

End Of The World News – S/T, 7"

Another project from Aaron Cometbus in the form of a band named after a title of a book describing, in part, Trotsky's stay in the Bronx. The lyrics, in fact, are adapted from the book to music composed by Aaron and bandmate Arun. Quirky and political, but it works. (BN)

Recess Records, PO Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733, www.recessrecords.com

* Enon – Hocus-Pocus, CD

What can I say? Enon appeals to my most aesthetic senses in a most primal way. Their music is pretty, sexy and tropical in an Esquivel kind of way that makes for a most delicious experience indeed. Toko Yasuda's gentle voice will make you long for early '60s pop (kind of like Connie Francis with a nice dose of France Gall for starry-eyed taste). And John Schmersal's vocals drive enough calm energy into

the songs' weepy-eyed moods to stray the band from being too dated. Backed with suave electronic beats, Enon's yummy tunes are bound to give even the most hard-core Pet Shop Boys addict a sugar-rush. (SP)

Touch and Go, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, www.tgrecs.com

* Ephel Duath – The Painter's Palette, CD

What we have here is really a fresh and unique take on modern death metal. This band is doing something truly weird and different, which is sadly not a common thing in the metal scene. They play balls-out metal combined with elements of no-wave, free jazz, hardcore and jazz-fusion. It sounds pretty terrible on paper, I know, but this record is pretty killer. Screamy tech hardcore parts end in jazzy no-wave experimentations (complete with horns) that lead into smooth and pretty prog-metal interludes. There are some straight-up horn and percussion-based jazz tracks as well as blistering metal tracks. It's like redefining classic metal and hardcore styles with influences that range from James Chance to Miles Davis to Opeth. Some of the transitions can be smoothed out a bit, but other than that, this band is coming to realize their high ambitions. (MG)

Earache, Second Floor, 43 W. 38th St., New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

Escape Engine, The – Celebrity Role Model, CD

These guys rock my world and then diddle my dark soul with their strong riffs and passionate, complex emo-ey punk tunes. The one quibble is with the At The Drive-In-like vocals. The guy sounds so constipated it's hard to take the record seriously. (DAL)

Fidelity Records, PO Box 152, Hillsdale, NJ 07642, www.fidelityrecords.net

Escaped, The – Escaped Generation, CDEP

The Escaped play angry punk rock with songs about punk stuff—you know, like drinking and kicking people's asses. (KM)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Esperanto – Play This Anywhere, CDEP

While there's nothing intrinsically wrong here, the calculated perfection of Esperanto's pop punk rings hollow. Much like a photocopy of a photocopy, each subsequent wave of cleaned-up-for-the-masses punk rock like Esperanto has the basic elements of anthemic, catchy punk rock, yet feels like an inferior knockoff. (RR)

Uprising Records, PO Box 490, Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingsrecords.com

* Essential Logic – Fanfare In The Garden, CD

I've never been a huge fan of the X-Ray Spex. So I'm not really shocked that Lora Logic, a former member of the Spex, was apparently cast out of the band because Poly thought she was garnering too much of the spotlight. But Styrene's cattiness might well be applauded. Without it who knows if Lora Logic would have gone on to form the ultimate in experimental punk outfits. The new double CD of EL constitutes an album re-issue plus another CD loaded with Logic's recent endeavors. Though the spunk of the former shines, the latter is the one that grabs at my heartstrings.

Spooky, dreamy, spiritual? You bet. Both CDs are an amazing display of Ms. Logic's talents. While the former signifies a political and artistic movement, the latter depicts the wisdom of an artist that's skillfully matured. (SP)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Avenue, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

* Every Time I Die – Hot Damn!, CD

The hardcore scene has sunk so low that even your most hardline straight-edge kids are hitting the controlled substances in an attempt to shield themselves from formulaic bands. Then, moments before one more bottle of Jack and a handful of pills does them in, they turn a corner on their way to the liquor store and Every Time I Die mugs 'em with a copy of *Hot Damn*, saving them only by robbing them of their money. Creative from ground zero, this record mixes melody, angst and the ever-present hardcore crunch into a perfectly executed kick to the teeth, steel toe and all. The one factor (aside from flawless song structure and great lyrics) that really pleases me is the lack of effects on Keith Buckley's vocals. So many bands rely on distortion or weird Pro-Tools shit to make themselves sound "brutal" that, when seen live, they come across only as the studio phonies that they really are. It seems that Ferret has a machine powered by bad promos whose sole purpose is to detect good bands. I've got a fever, and the only prescription is more cowbell (see track three). (DH)

Ferret Music Corp, 167 Wayne St., #409, Jersey City, NJ 07302, www.ferretstyle.com

Exercise – The Autumn Gentleman, CD

A wall of disheveled guitar, a drumbeat and off-key vocals yelling over everything. Loud rock that seems either like a post-hardcore sound or a garage-rock accident OR a mathrock disaster without the tech savvy. I really have no idea what this sounds like. Maybe that's a good thing. (MG)

Learning Curve Records, 2200 Fourth St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418, www.learningcurve-records.com

Fairweather – Lusitania, CD

This previously slick emo-punk band has transformed into a slick indie-rock band, but the vocals still retain that slightly whiny, adolescent sound of yesteryear. It's like they've gotten their pubes, but still can't drive. And a 60-minute CD is probably too long for most A.D.D.-ridden teenagers. (NS)

Equal Vision, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

Fear Before The March Of Flames – Odd How People Shake, CD

Welcome to Screamo City, bro. Trebly guitar noodling and complex riddums with mosh parts and, well, screamy vocals. This is powerful stuff, but my attention span can't handle the songs that go past the two-minute mark. (JC)

Rise Records, PO Box 135, Roseburg OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

KISS, S/T. When I picked this record, the e-mails started flying on the *Punk Planet* reviewer listserve—either you love Kiss or hate Kiss. Two good little New York Jewish boys dreamt up a plan to be the biggest, over-the-top rock superstar band there ever was. During the next few years, they would achieve that. But let's get back to the first one, a time before the lunch boxes, dolls, tongues, comics, etc. Their S/T record came out in 1973 on a small label called Casablanca Records. This perfect record starts off with the pounding beat of Peter Criss' drum fill into "Strutter" and then into the Beatles-influenced "Nothin' To Lose." Song three is the classic "Firehouse." The straight 4/4 tempo and the ass-shaking guitar and bass rhythms heat you up like a Hot Pocket in the microwave. The drinking chant-a-long classic "Cold Gin" is the fourth track. Damn, that's all you need, but there are still six more anthems, such as "Deuce" and Peter Criss' lead vocals on "Black Diamond." Look, too often people talk about the make-up or the fact that they are the biggest sellout band ever (but being admitted sellouts is better than being a wannabe one waving the punk flag). This band is glam rock to the fullest. I say "is" because they are on tour with Aerosmith even though I spent good money to see their farewell tour a few years back. That's OK because they still put on the best show of any band, period.

Five best bands that start with the letter "A": AC/DC, Apocalypse Hoboken, Anthrax, Allin (GG), Adam And The Ants.

Film School / Ghost Mice

Film School – Always Never, CDEP

The four songs on *Always Never* are lush and full, in the vein of Bedhead or Black Heart Procession. Krayg Burton's hollow-mouthed vocals resonate with ache and longing but don't overpower the beautiful simplicity of the music. The fluidity and openness of their sound that doesn't come often or easy. (JG)

Amazing Grease, 1501 Plymouth Ave., San Francisco, CA 94112, www.amazinggrease.com

Fiya – S/T, 7"

Beautiful, hand-printed sleeves and lyric sheets. Fiya are on the melodic hardcore tip, sounding like early Avail and sonic contemporaries of Strike Anywhere. (GBS)

Obscurist Press, PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604

Flamethrower – S/T, CD

Heavy rock that borders metal at times. It is time to coin this "belt buckle" rock. Big belt buckles and ass-kickin' boots with feedback and guitars filling the air over the singing of Lemmy's bastard son. (EA)

Dead Teenager Records, PO Box 470153, San Francisco, CA 94147-0153, www.deadteenager.net

For Reals, The – Wash Away The Cheer, CD

Pleasant, poppy music with the most inane lyrics ever. Witness on "Butter Cookies:" "That's why I like these cookies/ 'cause they don't go bad." Consult a goddamned thesaurus—you can do better than that. (JG)

Self-released, www.theforreals.com

*** Fordirelifesake – Breathing In Is Only Half The Function, CD**

It has to be tough for "metalcore" bands to really make their mark. They have to stand out in some way to avoid drowning in the over-saturated scene of subpar early Cave-In sound-alikes. These guys somehow do it. The music is technical and raw, with plenty of breaks and changes, much like the rest of the masses, but there is something I can't really put my finger on that puts them ahead of the crowd. The recording is well done, and all the instruments have no problem being heard, whether it be the screaming guitars or growling vocals. The sincerity shows through. Great stuff. (TK)

Forge Again Records, PO Box 146837, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgeagainrecords.com

4-Squares, The – Steve's Hamper, CD

This spirited punk with good drive and momentum is definitely a cut above, but the best part is the echo of D. Boon and the Minutemen in the tight, terse, shouting vocals. Some funny tracks, to—what is the deal with Steve's hamper, anyway? Maybe we don't want to know. (DAL)

Quincy Shanks Records, PO Box 3035, Saint Charles, IL 60174, www.quincyschanks.com

400 Blows – Black Rainbow, CD

This band punches out an assault of aggressive, rhythmic metallic rock. They're like a stoner rock band on speed. Loud, bass-heavy, repetitive, thrashy and fast. (MG)

Rehash Records, 3821 Aloha St., Los Angeles, CA 90027, www.rehashrecords.com

14 Year Old Girls – Zombies In, Robots Out, CD

As if the Mario Bros inspired cover art wasn't dope enough, THIS ENTIRE RECORD IS ABOUT NINTENDO! So what if the music is kinda

lame? This band sings about Pac-Man going on vacation and "getting beat up at lunch time, 'cause gaming is my pastime, OH!" SASSY! (JG)

Retard Disco, PO Box 461163, Los Angeles, CA 90046, www.retarddisco.com

Free Verse – Inventing An Archetype, CDEP

Free Verse is an all-lady hardcore trio that escaped Podunk, USA, for the greener grass of the Pacific Northwest. FV dishes out pounding riffs and shrieking and screeching at every turn. Lozenges and half-drunk mugs of tea must litter their van. Sociopolitical messages/rants become audible when yelling subsides. (EG)

Agitprop! Records, PO Box 748, Hanover, MA 02339, www.agitproprecords.com

Freeze Baby – S/T, 7"

It may be that Freeze Baby's three-chord rudimentary punk is not a statement of simplicity, but rather their way of saying that they don't know any others. Recording songs called "Punk Rock High School" where an "F" is "for fuck you" is so trite that it should be banned. (CC)

Modern Radio Records, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.modern-radio.com

Friendly Bears / Infidel?/Castro! – split, 12"

The Friendly Bears side of the split is a jazzy mesh of math instrumentals fused with trumpet played by Tim Byrnes. The Infidel?/Castro! side of the split is one 10-minute antisong of industrial noisecore that made my cat quickly leave the room when I put it on. (TK)

Rice Control Records <http://www.vegan.net/~forbes/ricecontrol>

Friendly Fire – Initiative, CD

Friendly Fire nicely combines posi-core and metal with some really catchy melodic hooks and breakdowns that come out sounding really cool. This was unexpected, because it seems like the sounds would combine like water and oil. It is something to experience to really know what I'm talking about. (TK)

Blackout! Records/Temple Recordings 931 Madison Street, Hoboken, NJ, 09997, www.blackoutrecords.com

*** Frodus – Radio Activity, CD**

I have been hearing about Frodus for years, but this is the first time I've actually heard their music, and I dig it. Then again, Magic Bullet Records hardly ever releases a bad record. Anyhow, the music here is intense post-hardcore with screamy vocals and discordant guitar work. There are a lot of bands playing this style right now, but Frodus has been doing it much longer. This CD is a collection of three sets of live radio performances dating from '95 to '98, so I doubt there are any new songs here. It serves as a nice introduction to the band or a treat for fans. Check it out. (KM)

Magic Bullet Records, PO Box 6337, Woodbridge, VA 22195, www.magicbulletrecords.com

Frog Eyes – The Golden River, CD

A more fitting title for this album would've been *The Golden Shower* 'cause it's piss-poor. Frog Eyes' attempt at Bowie-esque, opera rock is laughable. I wonder if they're in on the joke? Don't think so. (AJ)

Animal World Recordings, 122 Norfolk St. #26, New York, NY 10002, www.animalworldrecordings.com

Furious IV – ...Is That You?, CD

They call it "skate rock," but don't think JFA or Agent Orange. Think Warped Tour side stage, lots of metal guitar chugging and melodic guitar leads. "Count Me Out" is a good, catchy midtempo rocker, but not much else made much of an impression on me. (JC)

Naked Jain Records, PO Box 4132, Palm Springs CA 92263, www.nakedjainrecords.com

Gaddis – The Band With The Fiction Jones, CD

Mommas don't let your babies grow up to stick around college towns and start bands named after authors. The record is not bad as low-key, mournful, guitar-driven, instrumental background music. But when they read over the music or attempt to sing, things go badly. (DAL)

Self-released, 621 Emerson St., Madison, WI 53715, www.gaddis.us

*** Garrison – The Silhouette, CDEP**

Silly me. After their other EP from this year, *The Model*, came out, I started wondering if Garrison were losing their edge. After all, it was pretty poppy. As if to rebuke me personally, this record blasts open with "Come On Die Young," a two-minute blast of intense screams. The band takes it down a notch in (a small notch) in "Everything You Want," and by then, I was believing that few bands do this better. "This" being guitar-saturated post-punk, a less quirky and more rockin' version of the D.C. sound. Their last EP had the markings of Jimmy Eat World to me, but this bears little resemblance to that. They look a lot more like the Garrison I love: rockin' enough to keep the punks happy, complex and interesting enough to keep the punk alumni watching the show instead of sipping their beers in the bar. At 15 minutes, though, it's not nearly enough. Enough EPs, boys, bring the long players. (KR)

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

Garuda – Cold Wired Sentiment, CD

An interesting mix of grind and straight-forward hardcore with some black/death-metal sounding vocals. A hint of melody rounds this band right out, and I look forward to a longer release. (DH)

So Why Worry?, 908 N. Edgefield, Dallas, TX 75208

*** Gelding, The – S/T, CD**

Driving and catchy stripped down post-rock. Musically, like Gang Of Four, but slightly more raw and broken down, Gelding's weak point is its inconsistent vocals. Because all three band members contribute vocally, it's rather hit or miss. On "Two," and "Seth's Song," the singer's scratchy and screamy vocals complement the techy guitar. But some of the other tracks don't work as well ("Breathing Water," for instance) or at all. (JG)

Self-released, www.beeresinrecords.com

Ghost Mice / Saw Wheel – split, CD

Punk as folk! Ghost Mice (Op. Cliff Claven) play some witty acoustic-punk (nice John Cougar part), while Saw Wheel play raspy acoustic country stylings. Not my bag, but if you dig the grassroots folk stuff, this may be pretty cool. (DM)

Hill Billy Stew Records, PO Box 82625 San Diego, CA 92138-2625, xhillbillyx@hotmail.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

ED GEIN'S CAR, *Making Dick Dance*. By 1985, '80s hard core was in a state of crisis, and awful "crossover" bands were taking over. Ed Gein's Car followed up their 1984 7" with this full-length album of idiotic, Ramones-influenced punk. As was the case in NYC historically, faster hardcore sounds typically didn't catch on in the city proper, at least not to the extent that they caught on in surrounding areas. So this 1977-style record was welcomed, despite its dated sound. When their LP came out, Ed Gein's Car received comparisons to The Misfits because of their name, but lyrically they were all goof with tasteless, silly songs like "A Girl Like You," "Go Down On My Dog" and "Progress." Some politics creep into the lyrics as in the song "R.A.P.E.," but this is primarily a joke record. However, it's easily one of the most rocking joke records you'll ever hear. They followed up this full-length with a live CBGB album and a second 7", but *Making Dick Dance* is their primary work. Seek it out. You can thank me later.

Must-have mainstream punk selling better on CD, but available on vinyl: Dropkick Murphys, *Blackout*; Crucial Unit, *These Colors Get The Run*; Toys That Kill, *Control The Surr*; Minor Threat, *First Demo Tape*; The Unseen, *Explode*.

**Giant Bags of Weed / Shotwell – split, 7"**

The kid down the block has a jangly punk band, and this is how they sound in their garage. Not always a bad thing, but it doesn't get my attention. Both bands are basic, and the production average, but it's a 7", and they didn't waste good materials putting it out. (BC)

Half-Day Records PO Box 3381 Bloomington, IN 47402

Giddy Motors – Make It Pop, CD

Is there a Chicago in England? This post-rock trio creates atmospheric, dynamic music in the tradition of Chicago's finest (Jesus Lizard, Shellac, et al) and even had Steve Albini record it. The occasional jazz-inspired sections and the vocal delivery are reminiscent of NoMeansNo. (RR)

FatCat Records, PO Box 3400, Brighton, BN1 4WG, UK, www.fat-cat.co.uk

Gift Of Goats, Corpse Fucks Corpse, Get Get Go and JX:ATG – split, 12"

This is pretty good comp that seems to sum up the sounds that have come out of San Diego for the past couple years, even though none of them seem to be from San Diego. From power violence, "screamo" and early RFTC tones, it's worth a spin. (GBS)

Omnibus Records, PO Box 16-2372, Sacramento, CA 95816, www.omnibusrecords.com

Gloss – Presents Dirty Rock People, CD

Is this what the Ramones would have sounded like had they hailed from Detroit? I certainly hope not. Piss-poor production really kept me from soaking in this album, but aside from the guitar solos, there is very little to enjoy here, especially with the muttered, barely audible vocals. (BN)

Self-released, www.dreamwater.org/gloss

Go Kart Go – Flying, CD

Intensely earnest pop with a very mainstream feel and flavor. It's pretty smooth and easy to listen to, unless you've got that wired-in chemical aversion to radio-friendly moves that I suspect a lot of PP readers have. (DAL)

House Cat Records, 560 Fourth St., San Francisco, CA 94107, www.housecatrecords.com

*** Goldcard – S/T, CD**

Goldcard is a collaborative project between former Pond member Charlie Cambell and some of his famous friends (among the superstar contributors are members of alt-rock bands Granddaddy and Quasi). Recorded over several years and finally released in 2003, this record shows Cambell's got a way with wry pop songs. Both catchy and complicated, the 16 tracks on this self-titled release are reminiscent of some of the best indie rock has to offer (The Shins and Wilco, to name two) and is fast becoming a repeat player. (JG)

Off Records, PO Box 82614, Portland, OR 97282-0614, www.offrecords.com

*** Golightly, Holly – Truly She Is None Other, CD**

When *Punk Planet's* managing editor, Cate, saw the case for this record, she quipped, "Do they realize that makes no sense?" Yes, I wouldn't have picked that turn of phrase, but when you listen to this

record, you realize, yes, truly she is none other. Holly Golightly (her real name) plays excellent, bare-bones roots rock with a heavy flavor of old-school country and Americana. The music's so evocative of a different time and place. Listening to it at work, I could picture myself in a sweltering roadhouse, drinking long necks and watching through the windows the dust clouds left by passing cars. You might get something else from it, but this I know: It's good. Holly has a nasal, AM-radio-star voice, but it suits the music so well. My favorites: "Walk A Mile," "Time Will Tell" and "It's All Me," to name a few. Hot damn, this is great—and different. Break from the usual and get this. (KR)

Damaged Goods, PO Box 671, London E7 9GH, UK, www.damagedgoods.co.uk

Gone Done Wrong – Neither Here Nor There, CD

Gone Done Wrong is an alt-country three-piece from the West Coast that sounds very much like the Throwing Muses or the Raincoats. At times, singer Melissa Mednick sounds an awful lot like Courtney Love, but rest assured, you'll get over it. (JG)

Greyday Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208-2086, www.greydayproductions.com

Grabb, Jared / The Lesser Birds of Paradise – split, CDEP

This collaborative effort boasts two songs by each. Jared Grabb's acoustic gems are, as always, poignant and endearing. The Lesser Birds' songs are good; "Boy (Loud)" is the better track of the two, with rollicking guitars and chugging drums. Also features illustrations by Grant Reynolds. It's a worthwhile acquisition. (JD)

Thinker Thought Records, 1002 Devonshire Rd., Washington, IL 61571, www.thinker-thoughtwrong.com

Graveltrap – Concrete & Udder Chaos, CD

European pop-punk bands with crappy North American influences, or any other country for that matter, are still pop-punk bands with crappy influences. Is it a testament to globalization that England's Graveltrap sounds like any pop-punk band out of Los Angeles? Yes; but it's still disposable pop punk. (GBS)

Moon Ska Europe, PO Box 184, Ashford, Kent, TN24 0Z5, UK, www.moonskaeurope.com

Guapo / Cerberus Shoal – The Ducks And Drakes Of Guapo and Cerberus Shoal, split CD

Beware: experimental! A split that features Guapo designing a wall of building noise, while C.S. has a quirky singalong with old records. I don't get it. (DM)

North East Indie, www.northeastindie.com

Hancock, Wayne – Swing Time, CD

Old-school country served up with pickin', grinnin' and yodelin'—"juke joint swing," according to the onesheet. It's got that juke-joint peppiness to it, as it was recorded live in such a place. Despite its down-home character, this grows redundant, and by the end, my interest waned. (KR)

Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

*** Hands Of Death – Whoremonger, CD**

Hardcore. Not metalcore, or emocore or sXe. Just interesting, well-done hardcore. When I hear a band like this, I realize how little bands take chances or strive to sound unique these days. Hands Of Death hail from Montreal, but they seem to have some influences from our southern states. The first song starts out with some bluesy vocals before erupting into some gargling hardcore mayhem. The music is like heavy rock done at varying speeds. Sometimes at a metallic pace and at others, a more southern boogie sound, complete with solos and wah-wah pedal. Maybe similar to Pantera. Then there are the two vocalists. One seems to be attempting to expel a demon from his throat. The other yells and wails like a Baptist preacher. It's the ultimate battle between evil and, more evil I guess. If you're looking for some good hardcore with dual banshee screaming and a touch of boogie woogie, then look to our French Canadian neighbors. (NS)

Contempt For Humanity, ccwg666@hotmail.com

Happy Campers – S/T, CD

Despite the awful name, these guys like to play lightning-fast pop punk and have a good time. They like to skate and strive to be on the Warped Tour. With some miles under their belts, they'll be there in no time. Better than most, but I've heard it before. (DM)

Self-released, PO Box 71385 Las Vegas, NV 89170, www.happycampers.org

Hawtnay Troof – Who Likes Ta?, CDEP

Yet another set of ironic hip(ster) hop that's heavy on homoerotic innuendo. Hawtnay Troof place indie-rock samples over painfully jiggy laptop beats and lyrics that make Insane Clown Posse credible by comparison. Stop the insanity. (PS)

Retard Disco, PO Box 461183, Los Angeles, CA 90046, www.retarddisco.com

Haymarket Riot / Hitch – Figuritas Singles Series, split 7"

One of Chicago's best kept secrets, Haymarket Riot, get this single started with their brand of intricate post-hardcore. This is one of their best tracks, which makes this 7" a bargain indeed. On the flipside, Belgium's Hitch supply a scrappy rock track that made a fan out of me. (BN)

What Else? Records, PO Box 1211, Columbus, IN 47202, www.whatelesrecords.com

Heavenly States, The – S/T, CD

Sounding not at all like a band called The Heavenly States should sound, this debut release is a whole lot of Jawbox and a little bit Dismemberment Plan. Upbeat and raucous with strong melodies and hints of violin, The Heavenly States already sound like veterans of the rock 'n' roll game. (JG)

Future Farmer Recordings, PO Box 225128, San Francisco, CA 94122, www.futurefarmer.com

Helicopter Helicopter – Wild Dogs With X-Ray Eyes, CD

Helicopter Helicopter know all about catchy pop hooks, but they aren't sugary and star-eyed like their less interesting power-pop contemporaries. Instead, Zerby and Chadwick's alluring harmonies act as a veil for songs that are loaded with cynicism and a melodic undercurrent of aggression. (CC)

Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Erica Gallagher (EG)

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS, *This Year's Model* (CD reissue with EP). For people who couldn't stomach any more disco and arena rock in 1978, *This Year's Model* must have been a breath of fresh air. I picked it because it still is. I treasure it most because it properly executes irony; it's chock-full of infectious songs with sinfully dark lyrics thanks to Costello's ingenious songwriting. He passionately weaves innuendos and ambiguities cut after cut; his raspy, foamy vocals enunciate each syllable with zeal. Verses unearth sentiments of rejection, paranoia and rage ("Little Triggers," "Big Tears," "Radio Radio," "Lipstick Vogue," and "Hand In Hand"). At just two minutes, opener "No Action" bludgeons listeners with such aggressive vocals and drumming that it's hard to believe Costello has written a ballad in his life. Although many tracks are downright poppy ("The Beat," "Lip Service," "Living In Paradise"), the wily poet emerges with allusions to murder, jealousy, sexual frustration and pop-culture bedlam. The bonus version, released in 1993, includes the favorite anti-corporate rock anthem "Radio Radio," along with "Big Tears" and several others, including good-quality demo tracks, particularly "Greenshirt." Producer Nick Lowe is partly responsible for this album's matchless sound, in addition to the Attractions, notably Steve Nieve's enthusiastic brand of keyboarding. As a companion to this album, I suggest visiting www.elviscostello.info/lyrics/tytm.html.

Take these out for a spin: The Dirtbombs, *Ultraglide In Black*; Nina Simone, *Live At Ronnie Scott's*; Otis Redding, *Remember Me*; *Freedom Sounds: A Tribute to the Skatalites*; We Regazzi, *The Ache*.

Hella / Inside Five Minutes

Hella – Bitches Ain't Shit But Good People, CDEP

If I hear the words "ho" or "bitches" or even "hella" again, I'm going to start some of my own paintball shooting around here. That said, this experimental noise band crams a bunch of nonsensical drumbeats and guitars into five little songs. Supposedly sounds like Captain Beefheart, but I still ain't diggin' it. (SP)

Suicide Squeeze Records, PO Box 80571, Seattle, WA 98108, www.suicidesqueeze.net

Hellside Strangers – Love You To Death, CD

Dirty punk 'n' roll done right, especially impressive considering this is a side project. With songs like "Motherfuckers Don't Cry" and "How Can You Complain When You're Dead," you can't go wrong. Smoother than Electric Frank, better vocals than Black Halos and no organs like M.C. Decils. I need more! (DM)

National Dust Records, PO Box 2454 Portland, OR 97208, nationaldust@hotmail.com

Hersh, Kristin – The Grotto, CD

Kristin Hersh, an alt-rock celebrity from her days in the Throwing Muses, certainly has a lovely voice, and it's on full display here in this stripped down, acoustic solo record. The raw but clear recording often makes the meaty strumming of the guitar the focus, and it works. Haunting. (DAL)

4AD/Beggars Banquet, www.4ad.com

Hewhocorrupts – Master Of Profits, CD

As you might expect, the layout is a spoof on the classic Metallica album, though sadly, this is where the parody ends. A self-proclaimed grindcore act, He Who Corrupts certainly has classic metal influences beyond the blast beats and scratchy hardcore vocals. Overall, a solid release. (PS)

Forge Again Records, PO Box 146837, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgeagainrecords.com

Hint Hint – Sex Is Everything, CDEP

They've toured with Hot Hot Heat, Le Savy Fav and Pretty Girl Makes Graves—which is interesting enough, because Hint Hint is pretty reminiscent of them. In this six-song EP, Hint Hint are showing off their mad skillz and rump-shakin' music. (AA)

Cold Crush, PO Box 348, Los Angeles, CA 90078, www.coldcrushrecords.com

Ho Ag – Ho Ag Equals Go At, CD

This is just weird. Mathy sounding rock with lots of weird effects on the guitars and—sometimes—the vocals too. These guys are obviously very talented, and I can definitely see Touch And Go releasing something like this. Strange lyrics about a "brotherhood casserole" and "watermelon roaches." Interesting at least. (KM)

Mister Records, 199 South St. #5, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, www.misterrecords.com

Holy Ghost Revival – Hot Love In A Berlin Bombshelter, 7"

These songs are friggin' epics! They're filled with weird, atmospheric piano and handfuls of smooth changes. The vocals are reminiscent of early David Bowie, but with a definite prog-rock feel to the whole package. This band is really worth checking out, but really hard to describe. Just get it. (TK)

Burn Burn Burn Records, 4040 Woodland Park Ave N. Suite #4, Seattle, WA 98103, www.burnburnburn.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

SISTERS OF MERCY, *Floodland*. Oddly, almost every punk/indie "young adult" I know has, at some point in their life, gone through a goth/industrial phase—myself included. Long gone are the days in which all I listened to was Skinny Puppy and Nine Inch Nails, but recently I've been reconnecting with the darkness by discovering some of the great goth classics. Sisters Of Mercy, in my opinion, takes the cake in terms of crazy, gloomy British '80s goth. Their second album, *Floodland*, is a dazzling combination of industrial dance, punk, grand operatic show tune style, darkwave and early electronic music. All of this is blanketed in a shroud of ethereal blackness. It's much less thick and noisy than their first record; instead, there's a selection of more structured songs aligned against a keyboard/synth/percussion dance beat backbone, mixed with band leader Andrew Eldritch's characteristic low and deeply monotonous vocal style. The extravagant 10-minute "This Corrosion" is by far my favorite track: beginning with an eerie symphony of opera singers and quickly moving into intense, beat-filled music with a haunted house feel and clever, operatic choruses. There's also the great "Lucretia My Reflection," a fantastic minimal death/dance/rock dirge of less epic proportions. Don't forget the sad and mysterious piano ballad "1959." Such great, depressive self-indulgence! And still antisocial and heavy enough for the punks to get into.

Among all the crap, a bit of gold: GD Luxe, *The 21st Door*; Paradise Island, *Lines Are Infinitely Fine*; The Soft Pink Truth 12-inches; Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, *The Message*; New York Noise comp on Soul Jazz.

Hot Flaszhe, The – Hot And Bothered, CD

Super poppy, wannabe street punk with horns. This is what happens when ska bands dig RFTC and kind of get tired of the ska. They're on the 2003 Warped Tour. 'Nuff said! (DM)

Self-released, www.theflasks.it

Hoods – Pray For Death, CD

Here are 14 songs that reinforce the perception that our culture needs anti-depression medications. Brooding with rage and negativity, Hoods will please the tough guys: plenty of double kick drum "jud jud" action here. The CD art is nicely done by Sean Taggart. What else is there to say? (TK)

Victory Records, 346 North Justine Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

*** Houston – Bottom Of The Curve, CD**

Call me sentimental, but I liked the mid-'90s, when bands had the chunky, angular rock that Jawbox perpetuated. Too bad independent rock had to forsake any sense of confidence (and sense of rock) and piddle away with emo's eunuchs. Minneapolis' Houston nods toward the aforementioned era, playing pounding rock with smart arrangements and a sensitivity to sharp melodies. All with enough sexy sass not to come across as superficial. Think Shiner. Think Shudder to Think. Hell, think the entire DeSoto Records catalog. Mmm. (VC)

54°40' or Fight!, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601, www.fiftyfourfortyfight.com

Hypatia Lake – Your Universe, Your Mind, CD

A psychedelic band with a light touch, willing to leave plenty of open space around the trippy noodlings. Somewhere between cowboy and hippie, with a hint of Hal Hartley soundtrack. The whispery vocals come off as more mellow than spooky, though. (DAL)

Sad Robot, 5622 47th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98136-1407, www.sadrobotrecords.com

I Farm – Is Lying To Be Popular, CD

This one has it all, like a punk-rock blender with many speeds and chopping options. I Farm mixes the perfect amount of punk and thrash/metal licks. These guys have some crazy breakdowns, mosh parts, frantic metal parts, rhythmic punk parts. Hell, the lyrics are pretty good and sarcastic, too. Hopefully these guys get some much-deserved recognition for this one. (DM)

Go-Kart Records, PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

*** Icarus – Six Soviet Misfits, 2xCD**

The world of experimental electronica is continuing to dive into the punk world because it's against the norm, and this is good. There are too many bands out there that don't push the envelope. This happens in electronic music as well, but not to the same degree (except in the dance world). Icarus does an amazing job at making their mark. The beats barely reach the drum-and-bass realm, and there's ambient music on the top layer of the tracks, which creates an amazing, trippy feel. Icarus also masterfully blends random drum beats that initially don't seem to be in synch with each other. The introspection is left up to the listener—kind of like,

regardless of what the artist puts into it, it's really what the listener gets out of it. This is in no way the party record of the summer, but it is quite the smart avant-garde, chill-out record. (DM)

Temporary Residence, PO Box 11390, Portland, OR 97211, www.temporaryresidence.com

*** Ikara Colt – Basic Instructions, CDEP**

The buzzing debut from this Brit four-piece, *Chat And Business*, virtually slipped under the radar, but this tightly wound EP will definitely serve as ignition. Telekinetically transferring white noise from their sonic super-fuzz guitars and hailstone drum beats straight to your information-age brain, Ikara Colt are the soundtrack for the everyday data-stream mindfuck of modern society. Paul Resende's vocals whirr in the necessary emotion, going from deadpan to driving angst in one phrase, and forming conspiracy theories and compulsive calculation into a bizarre narrative. Sticking to conceptual, art-punk form, the band promises to combust within five years, before their sound has a chance to diminish into preprogrammed code. They've only got one left. (CC)

Epitaph, 2790 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Il Libretina – Tupelo, 7"

The a-side is a very catchy and basic guitar-rock song—nothing too clever or interesting. The b-side is a slower paced, more poppy affair a la Neutral Milk Hotel with some Skynyrd/southern guitar wanking in the middle. Eh. (MG)

Max Recordings, 715 N. Jackson, Little Rock, AR 72205, www.maxrecordings.com

Impractical Cockpit – Trashed Is Good, 12"

IC plays a wacky, smart brand of artsy punk that shifts from fast and furious to slow and weird. The vocals are strained and unrecognizable, but in a good way. I don't know what "Fix your appliances I insist/ the gutters are the graveyards" means—like I mentioned, they're artsy. (TK)

Trd W/D Records, PO Box 52096, New Orleans, LA 70152

Infertile, The – Dischoreography, CD

Compiling songs recorded between 1996-1997, this record captures this DC-area band playing sloppy thrash fronted by a Sam McPheeters impersonator (aesthetically sound, but lacking the sharp sense of irony). They pull a series of cliché hxc breakdowns, bringing an endearing chuckle. Sounds like they had fun. (VC)

Handstand Records, PO Box 16281, Alexandria, VA 22302, www.handstandrecords.com

Inside Five Minutes – Seven Song EP, CDEP

This band would have gotten radio play during grunge's heyday. With their bluesy, midtempo rock, they seem to be heavily influenced by early Soundgarden. Even though the songwriting is tight, and they explore different facets of this sound, I still don't want to familiarize myself with this genre anymore than necessary. (TK)

Down Peninsula, 663 Prentiss #2, Detroit, MI 48201, www.downpeninsula.com

**Ipanema – Je Suis Un Baseball Vs. Skull, CDEP**

Two tracks of heavy and melodic pop punk with emo-pop stylings. Jimmy Eat World, Blink-182, you know the drill. Not much else to say for this one. (MG)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

*** Irish Car Bomb – Tacos & Pornos, CD**

Irish Car Bomb is a suitable name for this band, because they sound like they'd be more at home in the UK or Ireland than Florida. I could see them on Crackle or BYO. This is fast, melodic, beer-drinking punk that has more in common with Leatherface or old Snuff than their American counterparts. There's something refined about their song structures that may have come from previous experience in Radiobaghdad and Against All Authority. Two vocalists trade off here, one having the rough and gravelly style, while the other is a bit cleaner without being wimpy. Their lyrics are a good mixture of anger and humor. From the liner notes, it seems like the band members switch instruments a lot, which may explain how they write such diverse, quality songs within the realm of melodic punk rock. It's nice to find a good, straightforward punk-rock band stateside. (NS)

Purple Skunk, 8362 Pines Blvd., Ste. 425, Pembroke Pines, FL 33024, www.purpleskunkrecords.com

Iron On – The Understudy, CDEP

Decent female vocals over driving rock tunes. Iron On pack a bit more punch than your average "emo" band, so I'll take it. Also, their record company has an awesome address. (DH)

Ruth Street Records, PO Box 8170 Woolloongabba, QLD 4102, Australia

J Neo Marvin And The Content Providers – What Is Truth?, CD

J Neo Marvin sings with a quirky tremor (think The Waterboys), and while his voice requires meat, his lyrics fulfill all expectations. Discover cool political rhetoric and find out why "I feel like I need to take a shower every time somebody speaks" is only the tip of the iceberg. (SP)

Self-released/Ear Candle Productions, PO Box 170357, San Francisco, CA 94117, www.jneommarvin.com

J'aurais Voulu – Sans Trahir, 12"

These French boys play street punk curiously devoid of any "oi oi oi" chants. The songs were surprisingly melodic and a step above most of the music I've heard from bands of this genre, but it's not exactly moving. If you're into this sort of thing and you still refer to fries as french fries, you might like this. (KM)

Dirty Faces, Universitätsstr 16, 44789 Bochum, Germany, www.dirtyfaces.de

Jackie – Goes Electric, 7"

"Goes Electric," the title track of this two-song 7", sounds like The Strokes, but the flipside has a more new-wave sound. Both songs are quality. Interesting side note: They live about 10 blocks down the street from me. Guess I should stop being a jackass and go see them already. (TK)

Glare Records, PO Box 82728, Portland, OR 97282, glarerecords@hotmail.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

VELOCITY GIRL. *Copacetic*. For teenage girls and boys who thought that riot girl stars Bikini Kill and Huggy Bear were too tough, screamy and not femme enough, there was Velocity Girl. One of the first wave of '90s sweet-as-fuck indie-pop bands (like Black Tambourine and Henry's Dress), Velocity Girl paved the way for later entries like #Poundsign# and the All Girl Summer Fun Band and created a sonic frenzy for fans of perfect pop. Though singer Sarah Shannon's high vocal range and sugary melodies made it virtually impossible to sing along to the 12 songs on 1993's *Copacetic*, it was hard not to try, especially on the album's standout singles "Crazy Town," "Audrey's Eyes" and "Pop Loser." Aside from the dreamy melodies, *Copacetic* also features a liberal helping of blissed out feedback (a la My Bloody Valentine) and sardonic lyrics. As Shannon pouts on "Pop Loser," "I'll sing my 'la la' shit for you anytime." And we'll be sure to listen.

Right now: Postal Service, *Give Up*; Black Eyes, *S/T*; Pixies, *Surfer Rosa*.

James, Elgin – For Carol..., CD

The dude's got a great story: teenage runaway, car thief, Boston hardcore hero, brawling street thug. And now, sensitive singer-songwriter. The tough-guy sneer of Guns 'n' Roses beaten into submission by the ready-for-prime-time harmlessness of Hootie And The Blowfish. Where's the miniseries? (DAL)

Lonesome Recordings, PO Box 15297, Boston, MA 02215, www.lonesomerecordings.com

Jet By Day – Cascadia, CD

There are a many sounds oozing from Jet By Day's music. Braid ("Worldwide") and Hot Hot Heat ("This Quiet Hell") are just two. The record label, however, needs to scrap the "inspired by Nirvana" reference. *Cascadia* is a tight pop-rock album from some young, talented musicians—but it's not Nirvana. (EG)

Kindercore Records, PO Box 110969, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.kindercore.com

*** Johnny Rev – Not Your Scene, CDEP**

To be a pop-punk band today, one has to be self-aware of the correlations of the genre. With that knowledge, it's easy to overcome the bratty clichés that come with the territory. Johnny Rev are definitely a pop-punk band, but one with more than a few punk and hardcore tricks up their sleeve, therefore eschewing any pigeonholing the press (you know, us) wants to pin. The vocals recall Jesse Michael's East Bay snottiness, but the harmonies sing the tune of something from the Fat Wreck catalog. The performance is tight, switching up styles seamlessly from sappy pop to straight-ahead punk, not missing a beat in between. The production from Matt Allison (Alkaline Trio, Lawrence Arms) probably lends a hand to its cohesiveness. The only complaint is that the lyrics don't challenge anyone older than adolescence, but I hear that's the target market these days. There's a lot to take in this EP from this Chicago four-piece and one can only hope for a promising full-length to follow. (VC)

Self-released, www.johnnyrev.com

Justin Gorman IX:XI – We Watch The Lemons Sing, CD

Justin Gorman IX:XI makes Wesley Willis look like Run DMC. His intolerable voice distortion and abuse of whatever equipment he used makes this album unfit for the garbage, let alone a CD player. The few intelligently written anti-American/a songs get lost in overall poor musicianship. (EG)

IX:XI Productions, PO Box 59661, Madison, WI 53725-9661, www.themroshow.com

K Word, The – The K Word EP, CDEP

The drummer has mastered the Fugazi-style fills that create momentum and tension like nothing else, but instead of building to anthemic choruses, they achieve messy, powerful free-for-alls. Fantastic drumming and some great instrumental moments, but they tend to get lost in the shuffle. (DAL)

Liquilab Records, PO Box 12521, Charlotte, NC 28220, www.liquilab.com

Karl Hendricks Trio, The – The Jerks Win Again, CD

Straight-up rock from one of the few early '90s indie-rock bands still around. A little too droning for my taste, and some of the songs go down too many paths. By the sixth song, I was counting the minutes 'till it was over. (JG)

Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Kenne Highland And His Vatican Sex Kittens – S/T, CD

Those familiar with former Gizmos member Highland will love this garagey, old-fashioned punk full-length that includes a hilariously gritty cover of "My Girl." Recommended especially to fans of the Stooges and Jabbers, this has a more authentic old-punk feel than retro releases played by the young tend to have. (AE)

Stanton Park Records, PO Box 600058, Newtonville, MA 02460, www.stantonpark.com

Kick Joneses – Tales of Discontent, CD

Power-pop three-chord madness straight outta Germany. They definitely lose points for trite lyrics ("Try me/ you know that I'm the best," and "Hate list, hate list/ you don't want to be on my hate list"), but since they're German, it sounds cute. A strong offering with a nice melodic base. (JG)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

*** Kickass, The – Death Metal Is For Pussies, CD**

Who needs lyrics when the music is this great? Unpredictable in every way, The Kickass know how to rock their instruments. Weird time changes and quirky hooks around every prog-metal-laden corner are only part of the greatness of this release. The most entertaining point comes in the cover art, which has a legion of "tough guy" heshier types dressed in pink underwear and "wife-beater" shirts displaying their band name. My favorite track is also my new favorite song title of all time: "So...You Want To Have A Led Zeppelin Riff Battle, Huh? Let's Do It." With four years of experience behind this, their first full-length album, you will have to hear the complexity to believe it. (TK)

Bifocal Media, PO Box 50106, Raleigh, NC 27650, www.bifocalmedia.com

*** Kid Gorgeous – This Feeling Gets Old, CD**

These fellas have definitely paid close attention to old-school thrash metal and '80s hardcore. What keeps this record sounding fresh and invigorating are the unpredictable change-ups and atypical song arrangements. *This Feeling Gets Old* is chock-full of chunky riffs, "rip your throat apart" vocals and rapid-fire drum lines that segue effortlessly into polyrhythmic half-time grooves. There's a distinct lack of catchy hooks, which only adds to the heaviness. Standout tracks like "Suicide Solves Everything," "For Those Who Have Trouble Breaking Glass" and their version of Nirvana's "I Hate Myself And Want To Die," convey the music's message of full on, therapeutic aggression. Bring a helmet and protective padding if you go see 'em live 'cause there's bound to be some heavy-duty pit action. (AJ)

Uprising Records, PO Box 490, Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingsrecords.com

King Of Prussia – Blood Rains On My Hometown, CD

Apparently, the lynchpin of this project, Sam Henderson, wrote over 400 songs prior to picking the 15 he ended up including here. It's an inventive home recording event consisting of a range of styles from garage to folk, with witty, political lyrics and soothing melodies throughout. (AE)

Best Friend Records, 1141 Cantrell St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.bestfriendrecords.com

Kut U Up / Limecell

Kut U Up – Pulled Over, CD

Sassy yet trashy indie-rock/post-post-punk with an “edge,” sorta. Sounds like a sophomoric Modest Mouse with some louder and harder-edged elements. Not incredibly interesting. (MG)

Rowboat Records, 1010 Golden Rd., Encinitas, CA 92024, www.rowboatrecords.com

L'Spaerow – S/T, CD

The band includes a former member of Braid, a band I always had a soft spot for, and this record has its moments of inspired melancholy. However, sometimes they have trouble navigating the line between subtle and flat, and at times it sounds a little lifeless. (DAL)

Lucid Records Chicago, 665 Timber Hill Road, Deerfield, IL 60015, www.lucidrecords.com

Landing – Passages Through, CD

Conveniently, after putting this on, I remembered something important, leaped up and banged my knee, lost my checkbook, spilled a box of important stuff, missed a call and generally freaked out. Then I sat down and actually listened to this amazingly soothing, serene album, and all was magically mellow. (DAL)

K Records, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecs.com

Landmine Spring – Are We The Culprits?, CD

Their press release suggests they “will appeal to fans of nü-metal.” Could you do a worse injustice to Quicksand, whose song they’re named after? These guys play some decent heavy metallic hardcore that bears some resemblance to Helmet at times, but doesn’t really come close to the greatness or distinctiveness of either aforementioned band. (NS)

Candlelight Records, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk; www.landmine-spring.co.uk

Larsen, John – Kismet, CD

If you can overcome the echoey, sometimes distorted vocals, John Larsen’s *Kismet* is a strong rookie DIY effort. Larsen plucks from all sorts of genres from punk (“A Rose In Reverse”) to blues (“The Fleshing Flail From Heaven”) to pop (“Medicine Cabinet”), but basically, his style is largely emo/indie rock. (EG)

Greyday Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208-2086, www.greydayproductions.com

Last Show, The – Sleep, CDEP

The Last Show play crunchy, punk-influenced rock ‘n’ roll that seems a little uninspired and unoriginal. Lots of wanky, Corgan-esque guitar solos and off-key vocals round this one off. (KM)

Soldiman Inc., 516 West 25th Street, Suite 500, NYC, NY 10001

Late Severa Waves, The, CD

What they call “intense sonic collages” I call “unlistenable garbage.” A guitarist, bassist, DJ and drummer making improvisational noise. A great example of why fluxus art is better seen than heard. (JC)

Record Records, PO Box 6174, Santa Fe, NM 87502, www.highwaymayhem.com/thelatesev-erawaves

Lazarus – Songs For An Unborn Son, CD

These acoustic songs backed by pretty electronics remind me of a stripped down and melancholy Pinback. Good, but predictably lulling,

these songs don’t reach epic heights—he shoots to injure but never kills. Also, the backing vocalist needs to stop sounding like a Gremlin run through a blender. (VC)

Temporary Residence, PO Box 11390, Portland, OR 97211, www.temporaryresidence.com

Lead The Way – It’s A Democracy When I Fucking Say It Is, CD

Powerful and melodic metallic punk from the UK. Angry singing and politically/socially aware lyrics. Fat Wreck influence abounds, but it’s well done and they’re earnest enough about it. (JC)

Onset Records, 19 Jubilee Crescent, Outwood, Wakefield, W. Yorks, WF13DS, UK, www.one-setrecords.co.uk

Lebatol – Rate, CDEP

Letbatol play catchy pop-rock with gasoline-style vocals. The interweaving, rocking guitars are nice, but the vocals grated on my nerves. A decent “CD single,” but nothing to write home about. (KM)

Self-released, 50c Effort Road, London N5 1AZ, UK, www.lebatol.net

Left Front Tire – 42 Ways To Lose A Friend, CD

Pop punk straight from the devil—because these guys must have sold their souls to have such an amazingly well produced and infectious as all hell sound. Wow, I really can’t believe on how good these guys are, even with the country song in the middle of the CD. (DM)

The Redeye Label, 1130 Cherry Lane Graham, NC 27253, www.redeyeusa.com/redeyelabel

*** Ted Leo–Tell Balgreary, Balgury is Dead, CDEP**

Ted serves up an eclectic combination of previously released material (the title track), demos of already-released stuff (The High Party), new solo material (the absolutely stunning *Sword in the Stone*, *Bleeding Powers*, and *Loyal to My Sorrowful Country*), three covers (the Pogues’ *Dirty Old Town*, the Jam’s *Ghosts*, and—of all bands—Split Endz’ *Six Months in a Leaky Boat*), and two noise-experiments reminiscent of some of the stuff on his very first solo record. As one might expect, it makes for an offbeat collection of material. Most Leo enthusiasts will find themselves forwarding past the first two tracks—heard ‘em already—and skipping over the feedback loops—because really, what’s the point. But even though you may not listen to four of the ten songs on this release, the other six are pure, stripped down Leo. These are solo, so it’s just Ted absolutely *wailing* away on his guitar and putting his customary 180 percent into his vocals. The standout track to me is “*Loyal to My Sorrowful Country*,” a beautiful, driving number with the all-too-true-for-the-times refrain of “*No More Shall I Be Loyal to My Sorrowful Country*.” Once again, Leo pen’s a number that proves that the political can be personal and the personal political. (DS)

Lookout Records www.lookoutrecords.com

Lewis & Clarke – Bright Light, CDEP

The three meek antisongs here are well-recorded, heavily layered instrumental numbers with throwaway vocals seemingly placed into the mix solely to make the sound more accessible. It’s a very artsy release that is more earnest than it is pretentious, but it still seems like a primarily academic exercise. (AE)

Sun Sea Sky Production, 397 W. Lake Drive, Random Lake, WI 53075, www.sunseasky.com

Librarians, The – The Pathetic Aesthetic CD

High-energy power-pop-punk that sounds good on record. But I hear their shows are a bootay-shakin’, three-dimensional version of their record that makes your toes tap and your ears smile. The singer sounds like the dude from the Buzzcocks and a pinch of the old skool Lookout! sound. (AA)

Pandacide Records, PO Box 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952, www.pandacide.com

*** Life And Times, The – The Flat End Of The Earth, CDEP**

Fair or not, The Life And Times are going to be compared to primary songwriter/singer/guitarist Allen Epley’s former band, Shiner. Similarities certainly exist. The Life And Times play alternately somber and loud indie rock with a focus on dynamics and mood. Someday I guitarist/singer John Meredith joins Epley on bass, but his influence isn’t particularly felt on this EP. The Life And Times opt for a slightly more straight-ahead approach than Shiner, but still focus on the atmospheric of their songs and play with time signatures. Time will tell if they reach the cult like status of Epley’s former band. (RR)

54°40’ or Fight!, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601, www.fiftyfourfortyfight.com

Light Pupil Dilate – Cascades, CD

This has nü-metal tendencies. Parts remind me of Disturbed or some other tripe, but at times, this trio shocked the hell out of me with some huge riffs reminiscent of a tougher Hot Water Music. (DH)

Self-released, PO Box 7967, Atlanta, GA 30357-0967, lightpupildilate@hotmail.com

Limbeck – Hi, Everything’s Great, CD

Limbeck goes the way of the New Amsterdams and Drive ‘Til Morning with a sincere whiff of folk and country goodness mixed with strong rock roots. While this record does nothing to differentiate itself from the acts I mentioned, it might not be such a bad thing given their popularity. (BN)

Doghouse Records, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623, www.doghouserecords.com

*** Limecell – It’s Gonna Get Ugly, CD**

Philly’s Limecell are known for being one of the Confederacy of Scum bands from north of the Mason-Dixon line. Their sound is a great example of how diverse the COS is, because there isn’t even a trace of country influence in most of their work. Instead, Limecell borrows more from East Coast hardcore styles, early New York punk and a trace of oi. Fans of their earlier work might miss some of the melodic touches more present in their past, but this album does a good job of expanding on their increasingly aggressive sound while including enough touches of melody, such as on the track “*Room Keeps Spinning*,” to keep Limecell purists attentive. COS fans will enjoy the cover of Buzzcrusher’s “*Rage*,” and the song “*Guilty*” covers the always prevalent punk theme of how the system treats suspects as being guilty until proven innocent. Other songs cover topics ranging from work to being lambasted by PC punk fascists. The last track, “*Wretched Tale*,” pays tribute to the underrated Wretched Ones, who also recently signed to powerhouse label TKO. It’s downright scary how many of the best bands of today are being picked up by TKO. (AE)

TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

ATMOSPHERE, *Lucy Ford*. “I’m glad I’m not famous. Imagine waking up to the fact that you’re simply entertainment.” One of my classmates back in the junior-college days was into indie hip-hop and lent me a tape to check out before class one day. The quality sucked, and I could barely listen to it, but I remembered the name Atmosphere from then on because it was nothing like any hip-hop that I’d heard before. *Lucy Ford* was my first purchase from this Minneapolis-based duo, and it took me by surprise. Actually a collection of a few EPs rather than a proper full-length album, the subject matter was regarding life and trying to find your place within this crazy planet that we call home. Frustrating girls and jobs are all common themes within Slug’s rhymes, making him one of the easiest MCs to relate to. That, coupled with his down-to-earth lyrics, made everything have super smooth and conversational flow. Far too many MCs have a quirky cadence that makes their lyrics difficult to absorb, so this CD is also a perfect place to begin if you’re just starting to dig down into the hip-hop scene. Ant’s production (though Jel and Moodswing9 took care of a few beats on this CD) are all interesting to listen to without being overly complex and difficult to wade through, again making this record a perfect combination for total heads as well as newbies to the scene. Do yourself a favor and wallow in Slug’s emotional misery.



Lock And Key – No Fate, CDEP

Grounded in punk and hardcore, Lock And Key follow the stereotypical formula: aggressive drums and bass, melodic but repetitive guitar lines and gravelly vocals. They're consistent but utterly boring. (CC) Irresponsible Records, 115 Avenue B, Woonsocket, RI 02895, www.irresponsiblerecords.com

Lonely Kings – Ides of March, CDEP

Searing hooks and growling vocals, the fifth release from this moody, post-hardcore outfit is pretty familiar given the slick and otherwise offsetting tone. "Last Parade," the record's hollow ballad, is awkward, but what the hell, it's the emotional purging that makes this genre what it is, right. (GBS)

Rise Records, PO Box 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

Lorenzo Goetz – Allure, CD

If you're reading this, you've already spent too much time thinking about Lorenzo Goetz. Percussion heavy and a little jam-bandy, this record is something your dad would own. (JG)

Innocent Words Records, PO Box 674, Danville, IL 61834, www.innocentwords.com

*** Lucero – The Attic Tapes, CD**

The Attic Tapes is a sparse arrangement that loosely resembles an alt-country outfit, but its frail sound betrays the fact that Lucero may, at any moment, fall apart at the seams. That feeling gives this collection a lonesome, country quality like old, scratchy Hank Williams records. But it's not just the music, and these aren't just songs. They're stories, nine stories, in fact, recounted as songs that ring with the simplicity of Steinbeck. The truth—through action or emotion—tells the tales here. Ben Nichols' high nasal call, which echoes Kurt Cobain's hushed howl from Nirvana's acoustic album or the strained growl of Mike Ness, carries the lyrics, but the band supports Nichols' movements with a steady shuffle with their sparse trap kit, solitary bass, acoustic guitar, violin, accordion and the lonely notes that roll off Brian Venable's electric guitar. This record probably isn't for every reader, but fans of Uncle Tupelo, Old 97s, and the Bloodshot family will appreciate this Memphis band. When Nichols dusts off a line like "He did the hardest part/ lived life with all his heart/ I hope we don't let him down," I don't know how you can't appreciate these stories. (GBS)

Soul is Cheap Records, PO Box 11552, Memphis, TN 38111

Lys Guillorn – S/T, CD

On one hand, this could be for fans of Joan Baez or Kate Bush; on the other, followers of the Beta Band might like it as well. Stripped down, melancholic folk with a moody and dark feel. Eh. You either like it or you don't. (JG) Little Cowgirl Records, PO Box 281, Danbury, CT 06810, www.littlecowgirl.com

Mad Parade – Bombs And The Bible, CD

I'm a big fan of '80s SoCal punk, but it's 2003, and very few bands can get that back and/or still sound good with new material. Mad Parade is now lost in the sound they helped create without any hope of sounding a bit original with this new one. Cash in and go away. (DM) Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058 Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

JERRY LEE LEWIS, *Live At The Star Club, Hamburg, 1964*. While the British Invasion bands were busy refrying the beans of American rock 'n' roll in the U.S., Jerry Lee Lewis was over in Europe preachin' the real deal Devil's music to crowds who either didn't remember, or just didn't care about, the circumstances surrounding his fall from grace in 1958. It's amazing how intense Lewis sounds on this album, considering the rate at which his personal life was spiraling down the toilet. He'd left the familiar confines of Sun Records a year earlier, hadn't had a hit record in six years, was beginning to become reliant on booze and pills, and his infant son had recently drowned in the family's pool. Maybe all this turmoil was the very fuel for the hellfire that raged inside Lewis on April 5, 1964, as he and his backing band, The Nashville Teens, burned through tunes like "High School Confidential," "Long Tall Sally," "Great Balls of Fire," and "What'd I Say." Aside from bluesy versions of "Matchbox," and Hank Williams Sr.'s "Your Cheatin' Heart," the 37-minute set is played as fast as a Ferris wheel's rap and as loose as a college girl at Mardi Gras. If someone who didn't know a damn thing about music was to ask me, "What's rock 'n' roll?" I'd put on this album, turn up the volume knob up as high as it could go, and let The Killer explain it all.

Albums currently in my CD player: Hank Williams III, *Lovesick, Broke, And Driftin'*; The Legendary Shack Shakers, *Cockadoodledon't*; Rollins Band, *The Only Way To Know For Sure (live)*; Acid King, *Zoroaster*; Uncle Tupelo, *Anodyne*.

*** Majority Rule – Emergency Numbers, CDEP**

For a multitude of reasons, I've been out of the hardcore loop for a long while. Whether it is the redundancy and monotony of the music, the politics (or lack thereof), and/or the ever-present "boy-ness" of it all, hardcore no longer spoke to me as a fun and subversive musical form. But then I listened to this CD (by a band I've heard about a million times) and it was quite a slap in the face (in a good way). Where the hell have I been? Majority Rule, well, rule. Musically, they play a brand of hardcore that's like a conglomeration of all the different modern styles (metallic, screamo, chug, thrash, etc.), and it works so fucking well. The singers growl and scream their way through each song with passion and conviction rather than heavy machismo. There's even a long and fairly complex instrumental track that's pretty brutal, but also damn beautiful. Politically minded, but not from atop a pedestal, badass packaging and artwork, what more do you need? (MG)

Magic Bullet Records, PO Box 2370, Merrifield, VA 22116, www.magicbulletrecords.com

*** Man – Machine, CD**

This is fucking awesome! Fuck The White Stripes and their stripped down rock—this is one man, his bass, a kick drum and a whole lot of anger. Almost every song is an anthem that anyone can relate to and make it their own. After a listen, you may think that this very Melvins-esque "band" is a joke or a novelty, but this shit is real. It's so bad but so good. Tracks like "Wasp Cleanaholic," "Losing Hope," "Happy" and "Fuck The Team" (a true mix tape classic) will make you a fan instantly. You have to respect someone who hates the daily grind, yuppies, hippies and the hokey pokey, but loves beer. My hero! Man is a genius act that I am now dying to see. Considering how dirty and gritty Man is, it is no surprise you may even see him play at motorcycle rallies while on tour (such as Sturgis, S.D.) or just rock any stage. I really can't say enough on how much you need to hear *Machine*. (DM)

Times Beach Records, 118 E. Seventh St. Royal Oak, MI 48067, www.timesbeachrecords.com

Man Without Plan – Futility Metaphors, CD

Man Without Plan is a great hardcore band from New York, released here on an enterprising German label. They remind me a lot of Avail or Action Patrol, but they also have a major early emo influence a la Heroin, but would not likely appeal to today's emo crowd. (AE) Ass-Card Records, Fritz Plontek, Annenstr. 5, 44137 Dortmund, Germany, www.ass-cardrecords.com

Mariannes, The – Your New Life On Medicine, 7"

These guys have a truly unique sound, mixing lo-fi indie sweetness with discordant experimentation and cool lyrics about the Midwest: "They brought him back to Omaha put him in an institution/ Where it's always a fine day for absolution." (DAL)

Dilemma From Day One Records, 3419 Dewey St., Omaha, NE 68105

Manifolds, The – S/T, CD

Dance-fueled garage rock, an album that's equal parts blues, pop, screamy punk, soul and old-fashioned, dirty rock 'n' roll. Not as polished and pop-oriented as retro bands like the Mooney Suzuki, but not overtly sloppy, either. Decent. (MG)

Shaman Recordings, 13013 Cherokee Rd., Etiwanda, CA 91739

*** Marked Men, The – S/T, 7"**

Keeping the bar up for the bands that have the word "The" in front of their names (like The New Bomb Turks and The Vindictives and, of course, The Scared of Chaka—well maybe not them), these three nicely dressed lads come at you with fast-paced, balls-out rock 'n' roll. The vocals are intense, and the guitar riffs go by loud and fast. This 7" features some tunes that didn't make it onto their album on Rip-Off Records. These songs are not throwaway tunes, though. Just when I thought my big box of 7-inches was full, I had to make room for one more. This record is a keeper, and this band kicks ass! (BC)

Mortville Records PO box 4263 Austin, TX 78765, www.mortvillerecords.com

McFaddens, The – Here We Go! (American Version), CD

The onesheet says this punk band from Nova Scotia comes off like a kick to the teeth. I'd have to say its more like a sore stomach ache. Because they're from Canada, you know this goofy, singalong punk band will sing about hockey and Chinese food, which they gladly do. (BC)

Aggravated Music PO Box 10699 Glendale, CA. 91209

Me First and the Gimme Gimmes – Take A Break, CD

Another collection of quirky covers from these Hawaiian shirt-wearing goofs. Their choices are always funny (R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly") and always well done. The songs go from being mostly cheesy to catchy little pop-punk ditties. They're a gimmick band, but at least they do it well. (DH)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

Mea Culpa – They Put You In A Mask, CD

Lyrical, this band really stands out; the singer speaks his mind so articulately that it's hard to believe. Their music changes from rock 'n' roll to sounding slightly oi-ish. By far, the best track on here is "Massacre High," but every song is impressive. This is a definite must-hear. (TK)

Empty Records, PO Box 12034, Seattle, WA 98012, www.emptyrecords.com

*** Miasis – In And Out Of Weeks, CDEP**

With the demise of such creative hardcore bands as Botch and Coalesce, bands are needed to fill the substantial void that has been left in their passing. Let me introduce you to Chicago's own Miasis. I was fortunate to see this sadly inactive band in a basement once and was blown away. Evan Mallon's guitar work is devastating while retaining its creativity and eccentricity, and the Andy/Joe Chavez rhythm section remains stuffed so deep in the pocket you'll only find them when you try on your pants next winter. Miasis needs to step up

to the plate and make with the taking over of Chicago already, because I'm tired of being forced into the Fireside's bar by weak bands. Oh yeah! Sean Ingram does vocals on two of the three songs. I require more! (DH)

Undecided Records, 7460 NW 127th Terrace, Parkland, FL 33076, www.undecidedrecords.com

Mico – Outside The Unbearable Grows, CD

Protest emo. Is that possible? Well, they're playing a style reminiscent of mid-'90s emo bands (Jimmy Eat World, Blueprint, etc.) only with songs that aren't about girls. It's on G7, so you know you're not getting The Promise Ring—just a band that could have toured with them back in the day. (KR)

67 Welcoming Committee, PO Box 27006, 360 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Milgram – Subversion Standard, CD

Surging, rhythmic, lurching, looping, atmospheric—those all work to describe the mostly instrumental post-rock of Milgram. Despite all the twists and turns, *Subversion Standard* remains cohesive and compelling from start to finish. (RR)

Red F Records, www.redfrecords.com

Milwaukee, The – Sunset and Sunrise, CD

Pretty straightforward pop/rock songs dealing with loss of love and other relationship-like topics. Some of the songs aren't afraid to rock, but there's a few too many ballads for me. (DH)

Does Everyone Stare? Records, PO Box 1006, Edison, NJ 08818, www.doeseveryonestare.com

Mink Lungs – I'll Take It, CD

Like the Flaming Lips, this band doesn't really fit into any genre label, yet they could also fit into most genre labels. They're not really punk, pop, rock or psychedelic, but they're all that. They're quirky and eclectic and make a pretty weird yet fun record. (MG)

Arena Rock Recording Co, 242 Wythe Ave., Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.arenarock-recordingco.com

* Minor Threat – First Demo Tape, CDEP

It's pretty cool to be reviewing this, as Minor Threat was the first punk band I got into after catching their part in *Another State Of Mind* on Night Flight a long time ago. Since finding their tapes in the "Import" section back then, they've remained one of my favorite bands, and they've gone on to spawn countless other great bands, an independent culture and the straight-edge movement (much to their chagrin). But onto the CD. Low-quality bootlegs of their demo have been floating around for awhile now, so after uncovering the master tapes recently, Dischord decided to finally mix them and release this cheaply for anyone interested in the earliest recordings of a landmark band. Apparently this was meant to be their first release, but they weren't happy with their performance and scrapped it, only to record their legendary first EP (where most of these songs are from) a month later. So how does this sound? Well, like their first EP. What little difference I can hear is that the music sounds slightly more raw, while Ian's vocals sound slightly less raw. He doesn't sound quite as pissed as on

the later versions. The drumming sounds a little weaker, and the bass is quiet in the mix. Is this release essential? That depends on you, I guess. There aren't any unreleased songs or anything. The songs are pretty much played just like the versions you're familiar with. But hey, it's Minor Threat, it's raw, it's only \$4, and it's a nice reminder of a band and town that produced some of the best punk rock ever. (NS)

Dischord, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington D.C. 20007, www.dischord.com

Minus – Halldór Laxness, CD

Someone must miss the Refused when they're willing to listen to the (International) Noise Conspiracy. Minus play very Refused-like, experimental hardcore on most of this album, then they break character and play a song that sounds like the Refused singer's current band. (RR)

Victory Records, 346 North Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

* Mirah Yom Tov Zeitlyn, Ginger Brooks Takahashi & Friends – Songs From The Black Mountain Music Project CD

I wish that everyday life had a running soundtrack that scored our most mundane moments. With this record, I'm one step closer. Mirah and Ginger escaped to the mountains and stowed away with some recording equipment. They invited friends over to join them to create music where all were welcomed to contribute. At times, this record is reminiscent of a mellower, acoustic version of Canada's Bram Van 3000 with its rotating band of players. The 10 songs on this record are intermingled with whimsical interludes of birds chirping, xylophones or train horns. The first half of *Black Mountain Music Project* has a delightful, and at times spooky, fairy-tale feel to it. All of the sounds and noises seem from another brighter, gentler world. You can picture a marionette puppet show in front of you as the music slowly seeps into your skin. As the record progresses, it begins to sound more contemporary of a little alt-country and a capella. Right before your ears, your little CD is all grown up into a mature, thoughtful, optimistic record. (AA)

K Records, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecords.com

Miss Ludella Black With The Masonics – The Skull Of A Man, 7"

Ms. Black, formerly of the Headcoatees, croons over some midtempo garage rock to give you tormented sounds over the Masonics' psychedelic flavor of yesteryear. Swoon, baby swoon. The end is near, but it sounds so pretty. (DM)

Smartguy Records, 3288 21st St. PMB #32 San Francisco, CA 94110, www.smartguyrecords.com

Mist Beets, The – Dorkabilly Sounds, CD

Herky-jerky college bar-band rock. They try to be funny and fail. The guitarist has every fruity effects pedal ever made and uses them all way too much. This is dumb hippie crap, going so far as to include a completely flaccid and uninspired Zappa cover. (JC)

Get Fisted Records, 915 W 14th Street, The Dalles, OR 97058, www.misbeets.com

Mixelpricks, The – Complete The Grin, CD

I first heard this stellar pop-punk band when they released one of the first in Mutant Pop's short-run CD series, and now they're here

with a full-length co-released by *three* labels. They're a really charming, *really* poppy band that reminds us that quality pop-punk is here to stay. (AE)

Boss Tuneage, Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com; Murk Ta, www.murkta.com; Geekcore, www.geekcorerecords.qjb.net

Moanin' Michelle Malone And The Lowdown Georgia Review – Stompin' Ground, CD

A lot more Sheryl than Patsy, Malone rips through watered-down versions of tunes that sound an awful lot like Lucinda Williams covers. Despite the sincere approach, the effort simply doesn't seem quite that impressive or memorable. (SP)

Daemon Records, PO Box 1207, Decatur, GA 30031, www.daemonrecords.com

Mommy And Daddy – S/T, CDEP

Le Tigre, The Epoxies and now Mommy and Daddy. New wave has been injected with the attitude (and technology) of the 2000s: hand claps, girl/boy vocals, call-and-response, oh-ohs, fuzz, drum loops, beats and bleeps. When it comes to reviving a quirky genre, Mommy And Daddy know best. (EG)

Busy Signal Records, www.mommyanddaddy.com

Moore Brothers – One & Out, CD

The Moore Brothers are in fact brothers and play highly structured, minimalist pop songs. The recording has an airy, open-space feeling to it. Typical for folk with a punk edge, these guys have tougher lyrics than most contemporary folk acts do. (AE)

Amazing Grease, 1501 Plymouth Ave., San Francisco, CA 94112, www.amazinggrease.com

* Mosquitos, The – S/T, CD

Maybe it's because as a tot I knew how to demand Corn Flakes in Portuguese before ever learning what the English word for cartoon was, but no matter what my reasons, I've always had a soft spot for the cool breezes of Brazilian song. That's why I am so excited to have discovered The Mosquitos, a trio of light-hearted musicians that exemplify the soul of easy-going lounge, even when they sing in English. Most of The Mosquitos' songs sound (admittedly) like a lot of Brazilian bands that tend toward Astrud Gilbertoish tendencies. But that doesn't mean Juju's voice isn't as delicious on its own, with or without the comparisons. So, go ahead, get this lovely record and relax in the sunlight that is dreamy Bossa Nova ecstasy. A refreshing treat. (SP)

Bar None Records, PO Box 1704, Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.bar-none.com

* Motards – Stardom, CD

I consider myself a Motards fan, and *Stardom* is exactly what I needed right now. Twenty-two songs of complete mayhem that will make it sound like your speakers are going to blow at any moment—or have they already? You get their three singles, several split singles and compilation tracks along with a bunch of unreleased tracks. It would have been easy to dismiss them after their demise five years ago; they seemed to be another late-'90s garage outfit that blended in with the Estrus, Rip Off and Empty sound. I can attest, though, that I pull out

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

APOCALYPSE HOBOKEN, *Easy Instructions For Complex Machinery*. Being a perfect outlet for my teenage high school angst, Apocalypse Hoboken has been one of my favorite bands ever since. *Easy Instructions For Complex Machinery* was released in 1995, a few years before I heard of them for the first time. This is an amazing album. What really got me hooked is their ability to be snotty vocally while staying musically melodic in a nongeneric sort of way. Their lyrics are extremely cynical and dark in a hilarious kind of way. The best track on this album is "Dean Is A Punk," which has one of their most memorable choruses: "Dean is a dick/ Dean is a freak/ Dean was a high school A.V. geek/ Dean likes punk and that's alright / Dean is a punk rock parasite." The Sam Sham And The Pharaohs cover "Little Red Riding Hood" tops the album off. It's too bad they are defunct. Before they broke up, they left the world with a four-CD box set that I have yet to locate, but hope to find before I die. If you haven't yet heard of Apocalypse Hoboken, you really can't go wrong with any of their 20+ releases, but be warned: The more recent the release, the weirder and less straight forward it becomes.

Now listening to: Les Savy Fav, *Rome EP*; Fuckface, *Don't Hate Us 'Cause We're...;* Minor Threat, *First Demo Tape*; The Blank Fight, *House Band Feud*.



their singles and both LPs more than I would have imagined. The Motards are special, and you owe yourself a huge favor as a music fan to order this right away. Their self-destructive nature—a train wreck waiting to happen—is so evident on this compilation. In this case, the derailment happens somewhere near the end of the disc, with covers of Joan Jett and the Dwarves. During their tenure, they were the best band from Texas since the Big Boys. Coincidentally, Tim Kerr spins the knobs on their LPs and many of the tracks on *Stardom*. (EA)

Mortville Records, PO Box 4263, Austin, TX 78765, www.mortvillerecords.com

Mt. Egypt – Battering The Hatches, CD

Loud rock music is a great thing, but sometimes it's easy to hide behind. Travis Graves, or Mt. Egypt as this one-man band is known, can't hide. Acoustic guitars and pianos are the primary instrumentation here, so Graves' high, reedy voice is laid bare, which works for such personal music. (RR)

Record Collection, 1223 Wilshire Blvd 811, Santa Monica, CA 90403, www.recordcollection-music.com

Motorama – No Bass Fidelity, CD

Catchy and danceable Italian rock 'n' roll with lady vocals and no bass. I'm sure this band is influenced by Bratmobile and The Frumpies (the vocals sound just like Tobi Vail), but Motorama is definitely tighter and more accessible than either of those bands. I'll bet they're a blast live. (KM)

Vida Loca Records, Casella Postale 17033, 00189 Roma Grottarossa, Italy, www.vidalocarecords.com

Morningside – Some Secrets Are Better Left..., CD

Take hardcore, street punk, glam rock and horror influences, and you'll just be scratching the surface of Morningside. This Boston foursome isn't for everyone, but if bands like the Misfits and Gwar turn you on, you shouldn't hesitate to pick this up. (BN)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1142, Alliston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Much The Same – Quitters Never Win, CD

Much The Same are part of the new generation of melodic punk that rock like Ten Foot Pole and the mid-'90s southern California skate-punk scene. Melodic melodies centered around lyrics of betrayal and friendships lost. (GBS)

A-F Records, PO Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.a-frecords.com

Mumble – The Cerebus Sings, CDEP

There's nothing like a great big hook for getting something lodged in the human brain. That's why hooks are such an essential element of pop songwriting. Mumble play energetic pop-rock and have no lack of hooks to go along with their powerful pop. (RR)

Chin Music Recordings, PO Box 3820, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3820

* Murder In The Red Barn – S/T, CDEP

This is amazingly good stuff. I'm surprised I haven't heard of these guys before because they're right up my musical alley. MITRB have the imagination to create some amazing musical structures and the talent to pull it off. Musically, they sound as though they're influenced by mid-'90s DC hardcore bands, jazz and a little bit of good ol' indie rock.

The guitar lines are erratic, mathy and complicated, but still retain enough melody to keep you interested. The rhythm section for this band is simply amazing. I would imagine it's incredibly hard to keep the guitars grounded, but the drummer and bassist pull it off with ease and creativity. This release was really enjoyable and highly recommended. (KM)

Ed Walters Records, 2416 S. Warnock St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.edwaltersrecords.org

Murder Weapon – Nervous Wreck, CD

A travel through time back to the late '80s NYHC scene. Gang vocals aplenty. Murder Weapon doesn't really bring anything new to the table, but chances are if you like this style, you won't mind the retreat. (PS)

Martyr Records, PO Box 955, Harriman, NY 10926, www.martyrrecords.com

Narrator, The – We Got Hits, 7"

Just two tunes from this Midwest emo kinda rock band. Catchy hooks and cool underlying guitar notes are played throughout two soothing (and at times intense) rock songs. I like emo-type bands like these that never slow it down too much and keep it groovin'. (BC)

Flameshovel Records 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave #276 Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

* Nasum – Helvete, CD

There's a really fine line between metalcore and just plain metal these days, and I tend to feel that metalcore is just a weaker version of the styles it's culled from. Then there are bands like Nasum who do a great job of blending hardcore and metal without taking anything away from either form. They've got the deep, death-metal vocals, the pounding drums and the heavy-ass guitars of metal. And they have the speed and rage of good hardcore. With most of the song lengths at less than two minutes, they don't get bogged down with unnecessary mosh or quiet interludes. It's just one quick blast of anger after another. The lyrics seem to take cues from hardcore as well, getting right to the point rather than constructing tortured poetry or talking about mythical winged creatures or something. Nasum speaks out against government policy, sexism, fascism as well as scene politics. But it's lyrics like "Judge me, I'll piss on you!" that really cut to the essence of this band. No bullshit, no solos, no pretentiousness. Just aggressive, cathartic music. (NS)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapserecords.com

National, The – Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers, CD

The National merge rock, folk/roots, some country twang, a pinch of pop and a whole lot of darkness to produce a pretty steady sound. What really adds a punch is the singer's low baritone (remember Crash Test Dummies?) voice, which sweeps through each track nicely. (MG)

Brassland, PO Box 76, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.brassland.org

National Splits, The – Fontana, CD

The National Splits is Mike Downey from '90s pop band Wolfie. One part Beulah, one part Mountain Goats, *Fontana* is a fun and airy record. Best listened to on a road trip to the beach or as the soundtrack to a summer picnic. (JG)

Mr. Whiggs/LUNA Music, 1521 West 86th St., Indianapolis, IN 46260, www.whiggs.com

Neal Pollack Invasion, The – Never Mind The Pollacks, CD

Former *McSweeney's* contributor Neal Pollack created this record to accompany a book he's writing of the same name. While Pollack has a sharp wit (my favorite is "I Wipe My Ass On Your Novel"), his nasal, monotonous singing/talking becomes unbearable. Like the Dead Milkmen, it's entertaining—in small doses. (KR)

The Telegraph Company, PO Box 110969, Brooklyn, NY 11271, www.thetelegraphcompany.com

Nehemiah – The Asphyxiation Process, CD

Melodic metalcore with some breakdowns. For fans of "the Swedish sound" of metal. I like the dual vocals (midground throaty and low Cookie Monster), but the two voices seem to muddle the overall crushing effect. A solid release. (DH)

Uprising Records, PO Box 490, Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingsrecords.com

Neins, The – S/T, CD

Why wouldn't you put an address on your release? Probably if you played mediocre garage rock that no one else wanted to put out. It isn't a bad release, just a second class Statics with keyboards. My guess is that The Neins are much better live than this recording tells. (EA)

Self-released, www.theneins.com

Neumann, Christopher Douglas – American Songs Of Hopes & Distress, CD

More alt-country for the soul. Political satire put in such way that reminds me of what Tom Waits would sound like in the front of a half-plugged-in alt-country band. Decent updated version of "16 Tons." (DM)

Fistolo Records, PO Box 2836 Upper Darby, PA 19082, fistolo@hotmail.com

New Christs, The – We Got Hits, CD

This is supposed to be the final record from this long-running Australian garage rock band. Plenty of loud guitars, scratchy vocals, pounding bass lines and powerful drumming in these midtempo rump-shakers. A nice record to send off these legendary Aussies. (BC)

Smog Veil Records, 316 California Ave., #207, Reno, NV 89509, www.smogveil.com

New Constitution, The – On 4, CD

Apparently this nasal, faux-British, bowl-haircut classic-rock revival thing is all the rage. If that's your new thing, these guys are very slick and nonthreatening. But why don't you make your new new thing Iggy Pop, or something dangerous and sexy and punk? You'll be glad you did. (DAL)

Audello Records, PO Box 66403, Houston, TX 77266, www.audello.com

Nicotine – School Of Liberty, CD

Japan's craziest pop-punkers are back with another full-length on AMR. This time around, they feature even tighter melodies and a fuller guitar sound. The lyrics can get a little silly at times, but they're much improved from their previous work. It's fast, fun and so addictive. Pun intended. (BN)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Mone Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

SACCHARINE TRUST, *Pagan Icons*. What better opening for an album that will completely blow you away than a burst of chords that go off like bombs? This is a group whose sound was so unique it was like a different language. By the end of this brilliant 1981 record, they get so deep in your head not only will you speak the language, you'll think it. Joe Baiza's guitar style, with its harsh, harmonic licks, manages to create painfully sweet melodies while blasting apocalyptic fury at the same time. What can you say about Jack Brewer's profound, tortured blend of Tom Waits and Jello Biafra, a voice that wails like a freakish ringmaster but with more pathos than novelty? Each tune on this short record gets you deeper into their universe, until the final track, one of the great punk epics of all time, ties it all together. "A Human Certainty" is one of those songs you play for people when you want to communicate something you can't necessarily say. It's one of those songs that goes spelunking in your head and heart the first time you hear it, then crawls into a deep corner of your soul, pitches a tent and stays there forever and ever. Baiza's pick-scraping orgy makes for one of the most memorable and awesome openings of any punk song, and Brewer's spoken word outro will haunt you for the rest of your days.

I listen to old stuff in the summertime, what can I say? The Jam, Gang Of Four, The Germs and The Stooges.

Nineteen - Tearing Me Apart!, CD

Nineteen play superlative, youthful, fast-as-hell punk. This fantastic CD contains 42 songs, with fun, self-important pseudo-sociopolitical lyrics, replete with a song about suicide. These kids exhibit dangerously proficient musicianship and ought to become hugely popular in the very near future. They sound like Against Me played at 78 rpm. (AE)

Dark Front, PO Box 291, St. Charles, MO 63302-0291, www.darkfront.com

Ninja Death Squad - Bridge 12, CD

Lo-fi grindcore at its worst. The two-man band idea is played out and mostly unsuccessful in this genre. It can't be that hard to find a bass player and maybe another guitarist to round out your duo these days. This is the band that always seems to play too long. (DH)

Agitprop Records, PO Box 748, Hanover, MA 02339, www.agitproprecords.com

*** (No) Apologies Project, The - Deconstruct The Dancefloor, CD**

The (No) Apologies Project is all about the D.I.Y. dance revolution, and I can get behind that. Punk-rock kids make dance music to get your ass quaking and your hips shaking, with smart and sassy lyrics about the politics of dancing. As The Project's MC Anaheim says, "You know that I got rhymes so sweet/ if ya got teeth I'll rot 'em." You'd have to be a total fucking square not to get down, dig? (JG)

Coptercrash Records, PO Box 6095, Hudson, Florida 34667, www.coptercrash.com

No Shame - Rebound For Glory, 2xCD

After a horrible acoustic intro with painfully asinine lyrics about criminal justice systems that made this public defender cringe, Finland's No Shame's excellent double album kicks into high gear. Recommended to fans of melodic (but not *too* melodic) political punk in the vein of Anti-Flag. (AE)

Fullsteam Records, Box 206, 00100, Helsinki, Finland, www.sitruunamaailma.net

Noise Ratchet - S/T, CDEP

Emotional rock with an edge that will fit right in at MTV. I'll stop right there because you've heard it all before. What the fuck happened to originality? They've since signed to American Recordings, so you won't find a review of their upcoming major-label debut within these pages. Good riddance. (BN)

The Militia Group, 1215 N. Red Gum Suite L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themilitiagroup.com

None More Black - File Under Black, CD

Ex-Kid Dynamite singer Jason Schevchuck returns with None More Black. A far cry tempo-wise from his former band, this is a straight-up midtempo punk-rock record. Catchy hooks and sincere lyrics that make for good singalongs live, I bet. Good, but not great. (DH)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

North Sea Story - Rebuilding Season, CD

Perhaps the best way to describe listening to this record is to admit that it had me searching the thesaurus for synonyms for "unremarkable." It certainly has its moments; they're just separated by mostly mundane indie-pop. Thirteen different musicians were part of the recording, but it does remain cohesive. (RR)

Self-released, 1419 Eighth Ave., #5F, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.northseastory.com

*** Officer May - Smoking In A Minor, CD**

Nirvana influencing rock music was inevitable. The only problem is that most bands that have followed in their footsteps have only emulated the formula behind Nirvana's catchy post-punk, thereby creating a limper version of it. Boston's Officer May instead resemble Nirvana's uglier, more aggressive, more compelling moments. Officer May draw on more than Nirvana's sound, but the similarities are so striking, it's hard not to discuss their music without using the "n" word. Guitarist/singer Chris Warren's voice is so similar to Kurt Cobain's apathetic drawl and tortured howl it's almost spooky at points. The arrangements and playing are tight and don't rely on the soft/loud crutch to carry weak songwriting. There's no radio hit here, but even better a collection of solid, dynamic music. (RR)

Ace Fu Records, PO Box 552, New York, NY 10009, www.acefu.com

Okkervil River - Down The River Of Golden Dreams, CD

Okkervil River's third full-length is a soundtrack of the sea, almost as if it washed up on the foamy, salty shore in a barnacle-clad bottle. Will Sheff's thoughtful narratives and soothing voice are set to instruments from an entourage of players: viola, cello, piano, trombone, trumpet, banjo and Wurlitzer. (EG)

Jagjaguwar, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.jagjaguwar.com

Old Man Gloom - Meditations In B, 12"

Not nearly as slow as I remember them being, OMG bring some heavily Neurosis-inspired slow and heavy jams to the turntable. Some of the songs seem to end rather abruptly, but the riffs more than make up for it. (DH)

Magic Bullet Record Company, PO Box 2370, Merrifield, VA 22116, www.magicbulletrecords.com

On Broken Wings - Some Of Us May Never See The World, CD

Lock your doors: Nü metal is invading your melodic hardcore. OK, it's not really that bad—yet. On Broken Wings plays Converge-style hardcore with only a hint of nü metal. I guess it is a tolerable amount, but they need to be careful. It's like playing with a loaded gun. (TK)

Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

On Trial - Blinded By The Sun, CD

Europe continues to take '60s and '70s rock music and put its brand on it. Denmark's On Trial take their stab at psychedelia and boogie rock. Like the best of bands like Love, On Trial is at their best when they decide to rock instead of playing trippy hippy dippy music. (RR)

Tee Pee Records, PO Box 20307, New York, NY 10009-9991, www.teeperecords.com

Onion Flavored Rings - Used To It, CD

Typical breakneck tunes with self-defeating lyrics such as "Ah-ah-ahhhh, I'm such an idiot." Songs blur into each other so that you're looking at the CD player wondering when the hell number five started because you thought they were still on number one. Sincere but lacking in grabbing originality. (SP)

Self-released, PO Box 190054, San Francisco, CA 94119

*** Opposed, The - No: Gods No: Masters, CD**

Holier than thou attitudes are bullshit. Who are you to take away from a protest participant? When The Opposed sings "you protest but you don't know anything political," they are taking power away from

those that would at least mobilize against something they believe is wrong rather than remain complacent, immobile or worse—stay angry behind closed doors. Who says you have to be "political" to protest? Shit, there's a place for Zinn and Chomsky, but there's a place for everyone, too. You think everyone in the '60s who took part in radical social change was entirely politicized? You don't have to hold a sociology degree to be angry. Anyway, The Opposed have a solid sound that's an odd mix of mid-'90s Victory Records style (double-bass drum beats and a howling group vocal approach à la The Exploited) connected by high gain mid-'90s Fat-style guitar work. But it works. (GBS)

Self-released, www.theopposed.com

Orphans, The - Chinatown/Moscow Massage, 7"

How can you *not* dig a dirty punk 'n' roll band singing about breaking and chopping off various body parts? If you're not too worried about getting a little grime on your shoes, pick up a copy of this record on stylish clear/red or clear/green vinyl and dance away. (BN)

Kapow Records, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836 www.kapowrecords.com

Ozma - Spending Time On The Borderline, CD

This is the band to listen to if you really like Weezer, but have a major-label guilt complex. Weezer loves Ozma, and it's no wonder. They have the same pop sensibility that blends nerdy sincerity with that '70s television show theme sound that's inexplicably sad. (DAL)

Kung Fu Records, PO Box 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

*** Paint It Black - CVA, CD**

Lifetime and Kid Dynamite waged a war on punk rock, with a provocative legacy of melodic hardcore that produced an oddly one-of-a-kind mix of catchiness and aggression. Fans initially disappointed by Lifetime's untimely demise were similarly depressed when Kid Dynamite came and went in a flash. Now drummer David Wagenschutz and guitarist Dan Yemin return with this third band in the Lifetime cycle. The catch this time around is that Yemin is singing, which obviously alters the expected sound to a great degree. Yemin's vocals are harder than the vocals in the previous two bands, but the backing vocals are still primarily melodic. Musically, this album plays like a third Kid Dynamite album might have, but the tougher vocals do take awhile to get used to. The creative song titles include "Bravo, Another Beautiful 'Fuck You' Song!," "This Song Is Short Because It's Not Political," and "Less Deicide, More Minor Threat." That the duo behind two of the most revered bands of the '90s is forging onward with yet another band should please fans, but PIB will probably receive somewhat of a backlash from those with narrow expectations. Don't miss this one! (AE)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

*** Paperbacks, The - An Episode Of Sparrows, CD**

With everything containing a touch of emotion getting lumped into the increasingly crowded "emo" genre, most often for financial reasons, it is nice to hear a sincere, refined indie sound and not see the word "emo" anywhere in the bio. The Paperbacks' debut LP is a very passionate and emotional record without being stereotypical. It's clear in the songwriting that the band leans heavily on its intricate indie-rock and pop influences. Doug McLean, formerly of The

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

TIGER TRAP, *S/T*. I think I'd take a bullet for Miss Rose Melberg. Every project she's ever been involved with is a gold mine of poppy hooks, witty lyrics, and bubbling with more emotion than most emo bands could ever muster. Tiger Trap was the band that started it all. Influenced by '60s pop and early bands like Beat Happening, this album is chock-full of fun, surf-inspired guitar lines, bouncing bass and Rose's trademark shimmery-sweet vocals. This album is essential for any pop fan. It also makes a damn good summer album. The lyrics discuss super crushes, broken hearts, jealousy and, you know, love. Recorded at the famed Avast Studio in Seattle and produced by Calvin Johnson, this record is classic and punk as fuck. After the band's demise around 1993, Rose went on to play guitar and sing in Go Sailor, The Softies and even solo. Heather Dunn, drummer extraordinaire, became a staple in the Northwest pop scene and has hit the skins for everyone from Lois to Dub Narcotic Sound System. Many fans of the twee-pop genre consider this one essential.



Bonaduces, writes some of the purest and truest lyrics and finds a way to deliver them with wholehearted conviction. The songs are all rather mellow, relying on the rhythm section and the piano for variety, while McLean's vocals supply the driving force. The more I listen to this record, the more I am reminded of the early Anniversary releases and the recent New Amsterdams record. For the most part, The Paperbacks have released an album unlike anything you've heard in a long time, and it's really, really good. (BN)

Pshaw! PO Box 2246, Minneapolis, MN 55402, www.pshawmusic.com

Parlour – Googler, CD

Once you get past the shitty googly-eye-themed cover art, there's actually some good, droning pop music here. The brainchild of math-rock genius Tim Furnish, Louisville, Kentucky's Parlour strikes a pleasant balance between electronic textured noise and structured rock. This album is at times quietly beautiful and instrumentally expansive. A gem. (JG)

Temporary Residence, PO Box 11390, Portland, OR 97211, www.temporariyresidence.com

Peabodys, The – All Out Of You, CD

This is actually two records in one. The first is their 2-year-old project that was supposed to come out on Mutant Pop and then Imperfekt Records. They finally got Bling Bling to release it and have since added 10 newer tracks of their infectious, biting buzz-fuzz pop sound. (BC)

Bling Bling Records 500 Clarendon St., Syracuse, NY 13210, www.blingblingrex.com

Pegasus – S/T, CDEP

Wow, is this boring! Melancholy, depressing elevator music with lots of violins, mandolins, accordions and acoustic guitars. Note to the band: Open the shades, make some coffee, and try to get some sun. Maybe that will help cheer ya up. And for God's sake, lay off the Valium, fellas! (AJ)

Caterco Records, www.catercorecords.com

* Petersen, Erik / Blake, Robert – Bellingham & Philadelphia, split CD

One of the most attractive qualities of punk rock is the fact that so many records carry important messages that mainstream media just wouldn't allow. Both Erik Petersen and Robert Blake take that to heart on this amazing split album by two singers/songwriters with important messages to share. Erik Petersen delivers six inspired songs that land somewhere between Tom Waits, Justin Sane and the Tossers, while Robert Blake's material comes with a heavy folk influence à la early Bob Dylan. Indeed it was Bob Dylan who first truly combined politics, social commentary and popular music. Years later, it is that same spirit that drives these two musicians to write songs that contain not just catchy choruses, but also observations on topics not usually approached by musicians. Yes, it is incredibly difficult to put into words what these two so eloquently put into their music. However, it is easy to say that, as intimate as singer/songwriter releases normally are, this split is twice as touching, important and inspirational. (BN)

Art Of The Underground, 50 Custer Street, Buffalo, NY 14214

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr) Dana Morse (DM)

FALSE PROPHETS, S/T. While everyone and their Grandmother listened to the Dead Kennedys on Alternative Tentacles, many of the bands on that label got overlooked (except for DOA). One such band that didn't get as much attention during or after their existence was False Prophets. Their first self-titled LP (re-released as *Blind Roaches And Fat Vultures* on Alt. Tent.) is a fearless release. Challenging both the church and the state, the False Prophets offer their anger, satire and insight on all issues brought up in their music. They also did it in the combination of American style hXc and British punk rock. Influences from bands like Gang Of Four, Clash and Government Issue, among others, could be pointed out, but the complete package is all False Prophets. They had a particular sound that was either in your face or very theatrical that made the end product that much more enjoyable. This is one band I wish I had been able to see from back in the day. Track this one down; you will not be disappointed in the least.

What I dig, and so should you: Pretty Girls Make Graves, *New Romance*; Love, *De Capo*; Snapcase, *End Transmission*. Is their a cure for *Monster House/Garage*, *American Choppers*? I can't stop watching them.

Pharaoh Overlord – II, CD

With a name like Pharaoh Overlord, I was sure this was going to be a metal release. Even the packaging looked evil. Turns out these guys play ambient, stoner rock. Very slow, repetitive rhythms drone on and on. This is actually pretty relaxing and enjoyable. Probably more so if you're stoned. (KM)

No Quarter, PO Box 42584, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.noquarter.net

Phobes, The – Fine Tune, CD

The ultimate in Mod technology. The Phobes mix this classic style with hints of soul, surf, punk and some other stuff with occasional dual vocals. These guys should get some recognition and much love from those who turn an ear in their direction. (DM)

Beat Neat-O Records, www.phobes.com

Phobia – Grind Your Fucking Head In, CD

Grinding our fucking heads in for more than a decade, Phobia isn't breaking any new ground with these 17 songs in 20 minutes: political lyrics with brutally executed grind full of blast beats, screaming guitars and excellent samples. Your ears will bleed for joy! (TK)

Deep Six Records, PO Box 6911, Burbank, CA 91510-6911

Picturebook Of Saints, A – S/T, CD

From the band name to the packaging to the band's sound, A Picturebook Of Saints is just a little *too* textbook emo. To their favor, it's emo as in emotional hardcore, rather than wussy pop-rock. Five years ago it would seem more sincere. Now it just seems like a gash, er, cash grab. (RR)

The New Beat Records, 3100 Sevier Ave., Knoxville, TN 37920, www.thenewbeat.net

Pignation – Devastating Life Scheme, CD

Here we have a Polish band performing seven songs of quality metal-core mixed with thrash: tight instrumentation, strained vocals and hectic rhythms. There seems to be a theme of the f-word throughout the CD. Too bad there's no expletive-filled lyric sheet to accompany this. Another good Deep Six release. (NS)

Deep Six, PO Box 6911, Burbank, CA 91510-6911, www.deepsixrecords.com

Planet Smashers, The – Mighty, CD

Can a bunch of guys from the Great White North pull off ska? Quebec's Planet Smashers have put in a strong effort for almost a decade with its horn-infused, upbeat, catchy ska tunes. The band's fifth release, *Mighty*, is sure to please fans of the whole third wave/ska revival thing. (EG)

The Union Label Group, 78 Rachel E, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1C6, Canada, www.unionlabel-group.com

Point Line Plane – S/T, CD

Pumped up thrasher math rock that sounds like lightning struck the synthesizers and made them come alive and decide to play the humans. One could also describe it as rave music set to PCP instead of ecstasy. Most impressively, they fit in some tight grooves amid all the chaos. (DAL)

Xeroid Records, 4714 Ballard Ave. NW, #187, Seattle, WA 98107, www.xeroidrecords.com

Polysics – Neu, CD

Delightfully nutty band that likes to dress up in spacesuits as they perform equally unearthly music that features lots of electronic drum-

beats and kooky space-age laser-like noises. They sing some neat lyrics, too: "Something's flattening my toys/ Something's wrong with my brownie." Huh? (SP)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Ponyboy Curtis / Jetavana Grove – The Ashmonts, split CDEP

Tight, emotional indie-rock/punk is a description that can be applied liberally to either of the two bands on this split. The screechy vocals of Jetavana Grove's frontman are as addictive as they are unusual, while Ponyboy Curtis depend on their clever melodies for the catchiness. I want lots more! (BN)

Ill-Fated Records, PO Box 69228, Quincy, MA 02269-2283

Porter Harp – Drinking Season, CD

Laid-back, mellow rock that doesn't escape Barenaked Ladies comparisons. Moments of touching emotional strife mingle with rather barren electric and acoustic guitars. I imagine kids bred on Phish would love this stuff. Still, not bad at all. (SP)

Strangler Lewis Records, 4031 Fremont Avenue N, Seattle, WA 98103, www.porterharp.com

Possible Suspect – So Sick Of Your Dependency, CD

This Netherlands band comes across a lot like Dead Kennedys in their first full-length release. Lots of powerful, political lyrics. Musically, they cover a lot of ground, with strange arrangements that keep you on your toes. (BC)

Mad Butcher Records, Kurze Geismarstraße 6 D-37073, Göttingen Germany, www.mad-butcher.de

* Project: Bottlecrap – Saving Rock 'N' Roll, CD

This is poppy emo that sounds designed for your alternative-radio station. Despite the obvious Samiam influence (especially in the guitars and vocals), everything seems so polished and calculated. The vocals, even with the Jason Beebout influence, sound like they belong with an '80s hard-rock band. The cheese arrives in a hurry, too. Take, for instance, the saccharine lyrics to "New Beginnings": "I could be just what you're looking for/ so open up your heart to new beginnings." You'll have no problem memorizing them; in a two-and-a-half minute song, those two lines are repeated for more than a minute. Ugh, it's brutal. Listen to your Samiam records instead. (KR)

Skeptic Productions, 5781 Oakland Terrace, Apt. D, Indianapolis, IN, 46220, www.harakiri666.com/skeptic

Prozac, The– Thanks For Nothing, CD

Bands like this owe a lot to the Screaming Weasel and a little to The Queers. This would be the young, newer version of snotty pop-punk from Massachusetts. Thirteen songs that will for sure stick in your head all damn day. (BC)

Irresponsible Records 115 avenue B Woonsocket RI 02895, www.irresponsiblerecords.com

Pseudo Heroes – Prison Of Small Perception, CD

Skate-punk-flavored rock with some decent hooks and melodies from this Down By Law side project. Not bad, but too many songs. Releases like this are supposed to stick and move, not slap and stand. (DH)

Go-Kart Records, PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

Q and Not U—Book of Flags/X-Polynation, EP

This two-song single offers up a rawer Q and Not U than their last album—the absolutely incredible *Soft Pyramids*—showed us. Gone are the pop sensibilities and harmony-laden vocals that seeped through the band's signature rhythm-heavy sound, replaced instead by strained yelps and sweaty hollers accompanied by the best beats on that side of the Beltway. A band on the rise for sure, this EP just proves that they're still able to get raw when they need to. (DS)

Dischord Records www.dischord.com

*** Quasi – Hot Shit, CD**

Score! I got the new Quasi record for review! For those who don't know, Quasi is the mastermind of singer/pianist Sam Combes (Heatmiser) and drummer/singer Janet Weiss (Sleater-Kinney). Their sound could be described as piano/organ/roxi-chord-driven pop music with a twist. Even though the tempo is (mostly) upbeat, the band's lyrics are incredibly pessimistic. I wish Touch And Go would have sent the insert with this CD, as Sam's lyrics are quite beautiful and a pleasure to read. The vocals on a Quasi record are always a pleasure. Sam's vocals are emotional and touching, but not in a pretentious way, and Janet's voice is as sweet as ever. This might go down on my yearly top 10 list. Hot shit indeed. (KM)

Touch and Go Records, PO Box 25220, Chicago, IL 60625, www.tgrec.com

*** Quick Fix – The Push, CD**

A few words of advice in these confusing, ironic, post-irony, pop cultural merry-go-round times we're living in: Sounding like Smashing Pumpkins and singing a line like "I just can't bring myself to care/ it's just so 1994/ we don't know what to do/ and we don't know who we are," is likely to create some kind of hole in the fabric of space-time. Please be careful before playing around such dangerous forces. Quick Fix combine sheets of layered '70s arena rock guitar with pop-rock sensibilities. On the whole it's not utterly terrible, but it comes across as a nostalgia trip for not-so-distant past of, like, 1994. (RR)

Lonesome Recordings, PO Box 15297, Boston, MA 02215, www.lonesomerecordings.com

Quintron – Are You Ready For An Organ Solo?, CD

Quintron (the guy in gray undies?) likes to show off his danceadelic talents with a lady named Miss Pussycat who plays the maracas and sings. The songs are droll and certainly party material. This is the kind of inimitable music that will bring your innermost rockabilly/drag queen out on the dance floor. (SP)

Three One G Records, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threoneg.com

Radio Reelers – Rockin' Sound, 12"

Some pretty crazy stuff from San Francisco, this 45 rpm 12" blasts through 10 originals and a Nipple Erectors cover, "King Of The Bop," that makes you want to put on your dancing shoes. This one gets the "rocks out with their cocks out" award, hands down. (DM)

Radio Blast Recordings, Hildegardestr. 13 44809 Bochum, Germany, www.radioblastrecordings.de

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

WŁOCHATY, *Zmowa*. With the recent influx of emo-pop releases, it's easy to forget the days when punk meant something more, when punk mattered. Fortunately, there are still bands and record labels dedicated to releasing music that isn't dictated by hundred-dollar bills. One of such record labels is Poland's Nikt Nic Nie Wie (No One Knows Anything) Records. Their recent release, Włochaty's superb *Zmowa*, underlines everything that I hold sacred about punk rock. Włochaty's sound is a mixture of the Oi Polloi blend of politicore, the energy and immediacy of Strike Anywhere and a healthy dose of reggae influence. The lyrics describe the bleak future facing Polish youth, the many wrongdoings of governments across the globe and many social and racial problems. What I truly appreciate about this disc, however, is the sincerity with which it is presented. When the band sings about the horrors of mass cattle slaughter, you know they actually care about the topic. The passion is evident both in writing and delivery, which is refreshing in this age of uber-commercialism. Even the packaging, with the impressive booklet composed of photo collages and the lyrics in both Polish and English, shows the band's intent on creating awareness. The most important thing about *Zmowa* is the fact that long after the disc stops spinning you'll be thinking about it. It stimulates and motivates you. It inspires you to think, see and understand. What is the last time you can remember a punk-rock record doing that? (BN)

Currently spinning: Rancid, *Indestructible*; Paint It Black, *CVA*; The Bouncing Souls, *Anchor Aweigh*; The Business, *Hardcore Hooligan*; Tom Waits, *Closing Time*; The Clash, *The Essential Clash DVD/CD*.

Ramses III – Folk Hymns, CDEP

This delicate, intentionally sparse pop EP won't make you jump up and down, but it's relatively inspired for what it is. Fans of Songs:Ohia would probably really appreciate the song structures here, and the vocals are appropriately pensive. (AE)

Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179, London E17 5F3, UK, www.fireflyrecordings.com

*** Randy – Welfare Problems, CD**

Randy is another great four-piece from Sweden that have put together their best to date, *Welfare Problems*. These 12 tracks range from personal to political and back again. Fortunately, they have the sense to keep it all shakin' in prime rock 'n' roll and power-pop fashion with a sense of humor throughout. Think The Hives with a brain in their lyrics. The keyboards on this disc provide a sound that may become "the Swedish sound," but it works. Many riffs are consciously or subconsciously ripped off from some of the best bands of the '70s and '80s. It gives a familiar feeling to this disc that a record collector loves. It is up to you to find the tracks; I'm not giving it away for free. The artwork even looks familiar, in a faded white, black and red style that looks like many of records in the collection of punk's past. These boys did it right this time around. Favorite tracks like "Cheap Thrills" and "Dirty Tricks" will have you singing and dancing the first time through. (EA)

Burning Heart Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.burningheart.com

Real McKenzies, The – Pissed Tae Th' Gills, CD

A Scottish punk band (complete with bagpipes) pays a "drunken live tribute" to fellow Scot Robbie Burns, a poet/songwriter from the late 1700, who penned many traditional Scottish songs. Maybe it's because of my Scottish heritage, but I actually thought this was fun. The drunken rants in between songs were classic. (KM)

Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC, V5G 3G0, Canada, www.suddendeathrecords.com

Recuerdo – Meramac/Mahomet, CD

The final aimless & annoying song aside, this is a solid record full of delicate compositions that skillfully build tension and expectations. Some of the more energetic numbers even seem to create a new, intriguing genre, surf-goth. But most of the tunes are softer and slower, more sinister. (DAL)

Silent Film Soundtracks, PO Box 10641, Peoria, IL 61612, www.silentfilmsoundtracks.com

Red Channels, The – S/T, CD

Like a post-apocalyptic school intercom, the echoey voice and the official-sounding drum-roll beckons the lined up, glazed-over masses to join the collective at the hive. Or in gym class. Other tunes lose the loaded echo for a spacey, keyboard-infused indie rock that is full of mind-bending loops. A little cold. (DAL)

Silver Girl Records, PO Box 161024, San Diego, CA 02176, www.silvergirl.com

Red Hot Valentines, The – Summer Fling, CD

Yet another great pop-sounding band that hails from college town central, Champaign, Ill. These lads make some damn fine radio-friendly rock 'n' roll. Great production, great packaging, 10 great songs and great usage of a keyboard to ease you into the refrains. WOW! (BC)

Polyvinyl Records, PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140, www.polyvinylrecords.com

*** Red Satyrs, 7"**

While Red Satyrs certainly stand up just fine on their own, the sounds of several past greats echo throughout these four songs. Revved up, amped out, jacked up howls of the ghosts of the likes of the Gun Club, the Clash and the Cramps (OK, they're not dead, but they're spooky) all haunt these tracks. Red Satyrs are a little bit Western swing, a little bit surfed-out guitar and a whole lot of punked up rock & roll. This is what happens when you mix trucker speed and old rock 'n' roll records. It's a great time if you live. (RR)

THD Records, PO Box 18661, Minneapolis, MN 55418

Redscare, The – Eightpiecesofsummer, CD

Frantic power pop that flirts between Promise Ring-esque tendencies and straight-up indie rock. The drum beats are solid, and the guitar playing is scattered but inventive. There's a lot of soul within the Redscare that makes this all exciting. (GBS)

Teenage Rampage Records, www.jononation.com/tr

Remake Remodel – S/T, CD

This is the debut from the Australian four-piece female punk-rock band. At times the songs get into a cool, '70s English reggae-punk feel. At other times, it's just four good rock songs. Actually it's three songs, as the fourth is a remix of the third, but who's counting anyway? (BC)

Self-released, www.remakere remodel.live.com.au

Remedy Session – S/T, CD

This is some really nice, emotional pop-rock with boy/girl vocals and sappy lyrics. I really enjoyed listening to this, but it's certainly nothing new. Well worth a listen if you don't mind your indie rock a little polished. (KM)

The Redemption Recording Co., PO Box 10238, Beverly Hills, CA 90213, www.redemption.net; Recovery Records, 1501 SW 25 Ave., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312, www.recoveryrecords.com

Revolvers, The / Duane Peters And The Hunns – split, CD

The Revolvers start this one off with a painfully slow acoustic song, then plunge into some run-of-the-mill punk rock with raspy vocals. Next up come The Revolvers, who bring more run of the mill, but slightly more melodic and anthemic-sounding punk rock tunes. That does it. (KM)

Dirty Faces, Universitätsstr 16, 44789 Bochum, Germany, www.dirtyfaces.de



Riddle Of Steel – Python, CD

These guys thank Jason Farrell (Bluetip, Retisonic) in their liner notes, and they should, as this band sounds like one of his projects. Not to dismiss it—this is quality angular post-punk in the D.C. vein. And for my money, that's a good sound. (KR)

Asctec Records, PO Box 2224, St. Louis, MO 63109, www.asctecrecords.com

Riffs, The – Death or Glory, CD

Whoa! It's punk, it's rock 'n' roll, it's dudes with eyeliner. The Riffs have a sound taken directly from old rock 'n' roll, Ramones-style punk and maybe a little '80s cheese metal. If you guessed the songs were about drinking and being fucked up, pat yourself on the back. Meh. (KM)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Rise And Shine – Stripped Down, CD

Ultra-amateur garage recordings that are both snotty and sloppy, so we'll call it snopcore. Mostly acoustic snopcore with some karaoke, too. Sometimes it's just them telling their live audience to shut up. They call it their "attempt at minimalism." When they stripped down they took out whatever makes them listenable. (DAL)

www.perplexagon.com

Rise And Shine – Loud As You Please, CD

DIY, lo-fi punk rock nuttiness. All over the place musically, like a less talented Schlöng or a less retarded Sockeye. This is part of a Rise And Shine subscription service, where for \$24 a year you get a new CD every month. Ah, the impetuosity of youth. (JC)

Perplexagon Audio, 6605 Capitol Hill, Arlington TX 76017, www.perplexagon.com

Rock City Crimewave – Sealed With A Curse, CD

I imagine these are the kinds of tunes a modern Fonzie would dig: a little rockabilly, a little surf, and a little punk rock with a bit of a horror theme going on. The artwork for the CD flat out rocks. (KM)

Pig Pile Records, 28 Rugg Road, Allston, MA 02134, www.pigpilerecords.com

* Rogers, Amanda – The Places You Dwell, CD

A lot of people scoff at the past decades' growing crop of "girl and her piano" acts, myself included. When it seems like every woman with a voice and a knack for the keys is releasing her poetic vision upon the world, the act becomes trite and boring. But then a ray of sunshine beacons down from the sky in the form of singer/songwriters like Amanda Rogers, whose songs are eloquent, beautiful and unlike anything I've heard before. The record is simple, yet elegant. Amanda's piano playing crescendos in and out around, and it's sometimes backed by a tiny symphony of strings or guitars. The songs ache (as cheesy as that sounds), but they are really an outpouring of emotion unmatched by any other. Her voice is as sugary sweet as it is dark and intense; this whole mass of contradictions is really what makes the record perfect. (MG)

Immigrant Sun, PO Box 150771, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

Roy – The White, CDEP

Roy plays interestingly broad, mild-mannered punk, which never gets too aggressive or too laid back. This EP was brilliantly recorded on quarter-inch tape instead of digitally, and the effort shows. Besides the stunning sound quality, the EP is also stunningly written and well-executed. (AE)

Lonesome Corner, PO Box 23113, Seattle, WA 98102-0413

Roy, Arundhati – Come September, CD

The eloquent and poetic author of *The God Of Small Things* lectures about the evils of U.S. and Western globalization, especially since the events of September 11th. Extraordinarily insightful and articulate, Roy's essays justify the author's brilliant reputation. An educational gateway that schools would do well to introduce to students. (SP)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Rufio – 1985, CD

Rufio's 1985 reeks of the Blink-182 generation of pop-punk boy bands. Soft-spoken vocals and motivational-speaker lyrics counteract the band's potential for developing into something more. (EG)

Nitro Records, 7071 Warner Ave., Ste. F736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.nitrorecords.com

Sainte Cathelines, The – The Heart Of Arrogance, CD

Melodic hardcore from Canada with an undeniably old-school feel and gruff vocals sung in English and French. It's rough, angry and may just prove that Canada does matter. A percentage of each copy sold goes to a nonprofit organization that fights discrimination, an added incentive to buy this record. (BN)

Dare To Care Records, PO Box 463, STN. C, Montreal, QC H2L 4K4, Canada, www.daretocare.com

Same Day Service – Waiting For Tomorrow, CD

SDS from Austin keeps releasing excellent pop-punk full-lengths, with unique, semirobotic female vocals that help compensate for sometimes overly cutesy lyrics. There are twin sisters in this band that sounds a lot like early Face To Face. If their next album is still self-released, it'll be strictly by choice. (AE)

Self-released, PO Box 41454, Austin, TX 78704, www.sdsrocks.com

Saxon Shore – Four Months Of Darkness, CDEP

This amazing instrumental five-song EP is layered with loops, guitar parts (acoustic and electric), percussion and piano. A little Mice Parade, a little Godspeed YBE. Perfect for that moment of brooding or looking within. (DM)

Burnt Toast Vinyl, PO Box 42188 Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.burnttoastvinyl.com; Broken Factory, RRI Box 106 Milan, PA 18831, www.brokenfactory.net

SBGB – Ate Your Pizza, CD

SBGB is The Queens or Screeching Weasel on steroids, with a lead singer that belongs on TKO Records. *Ate Your Pizza* is a heaping of formula-based punk cuts like "The Pope Was A Punk" and "Half-ass Punk." SBGB shines brightest on a fun skacore track dubbed "Broccoli Spears." Who woulda thought? (EG)

Self-released, www.averageday.org

Scarlet – Something To Lust About, CD

Above-average metalcore. Scarlet features lots of machine-gun double bass. The drumming actually stands out in this band, especially when the guitars are chugging along with it. But when they're not, the guitars are going haywire with a nice display of fretboard gymnastics. The singer then provides the suitable tortured vocals over everything. (NS)

Ferret, 47 Wayne St. #3, Jersey City, NJ 07302, www.ferretstyle.com

Scars Of Tomorrow – Design Your Fate, CD

Could it be Satan droning over chugging guitars and rolling drum licks? Scars Of Tomorrow's growling, gurgling vocalist sounds like he wants to put the fear of Lucifer in you, but in reality, I found their generic brand of metal and clichéd lyrics rather uninspired. (JD)

Thorp Records, PO Box 6786, Toledo, OH 43612, www.thorprecords.com

Schematic Of A Waking Life / Stabyouintheheadandeatyourfaceoff – split, 7"

Stab play five tracks of finger waving hXc somewhere between mid-to fast-tempo. Schematic offer one track of Ebullient-style screampcore. Not bad stuff, but what's with the names? (DM)

Red Scroll Records, 5 Arbor Lane, Wallingford, CT 06492, www.redscroll.com

Science Of Yarba – Check The Sound, 12"

Noisy rock 'n' roll with lots of feedback. Reminds me of the time I saw Yaphet Koto, but with more screaming. I enjoyed this. (DH)

Self-released, PO Box 2368, Portland, OR 97208-2368

Secret Channel, The – Have You Heard, CDEP

Don't let the opening track fool you; The Secret Channel is slick, hipster pop poorly disguised as garage. What is hipster pop? Slick indie pop that hipsters cling to for the night and discard like a used condom in the morning because its popularity has run its course. (GBS)

Self-released, www.mouthpiecepr.com

Settlefish – Dance A While, Upset, CD

Not for instant-gratification seekers, this is like emo with an orchestral quality. They have complex compositions that are admirably restrained, but sometimes a little cold. Not a surprise from a band that namechecks Don Delillo in its lyrics (the second band I'm reviewing this round to do so—what's going on?). (DAL)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deeplem.com

Shedding – Now I'm Shedding, 12"

Noisy electronic experimentation characterized by a bunch of sounds mashed together, sound stretching, looping, layering, soundscapes, etc. Sound art seems to be the new hot musical adventure. If you're into that, check this record out. (MG)

Hometapes, 430 E. 50th St., Savannah, GA 31405, www.home-tapes.com

Shocks, The – Bored To Be In Zero 3, CD

Slightly garagey, uber-dancey punk rock by this German three-piece. Sounds a lot like all the punk 'n' roll greats of the late '70s/early '80s (Vibrators, Buzzcocks, etc.). Simple, fun and classic. (MG)

Dirty Faces, Universitätsstr. 16, 44789 Bochum, Germany, www.dirtyfaces.de

Shocks, The – More Cuts For You In Zero 2, CD

Brit-influenced punks from Germany kick out buoyant, '77-style two-minute tracks for your pogo pogo pogo. The best part is that, unless you speak German, you can't understand a damn word and just join in with your own bratty snarl. Worth every penny of shipping and handling. (CC)

Attack Records, Postfach 350541, 10214 Berlin, Germany, www.attackrecords.de

Shortcut To Newark – Heads In Hands, Hearts In Half, CDEP

Four-song EP of midtempo, falsetto, good-natured rockers. Simple, straightforward and peppy. I'd expect something a little tougher from Newark, but if you're jonesing for pleasantly poppy, this is it. (DAL)

Rock 'em Dead Records, 20 Maypole Drive, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 3TZ, UK

Reviewer Spotlight: Sonia Pereira (SP)

NAT KING COLE, *Lush Life*. What can be said about one of the coolest men in the galaxy ever? I mean, *ever*. Nat King Cole is the equivalent of a hot bath, awesome champagne, really good cheese—uh, just really good, expensive stuff that you could never live without as an adult since it practically distinguishes you from your former childish fool-self and has transformed you into a bona-fide mature woman (ahem, man) with enough class to knock out freakin' Gwynnie Paltrow. *Lush Life* offers listeners the grace of suave singing, fancy lyrics like "His maturity was as wine to her/ As her youth was as roses to him." Yeah, it's sexist, but it's a hell of a lot better than "c'mon baby, suck my wang." And the music is simply, oh, what's the word? Darling! This dude is f.i.n.e. That said, get this record! You'll fall in love with life (not to mention an old star) again and again and again.

Shot Baker – Time To Panic, CDEP

Shot Baker's five-song short player follows the typical punk-rock formula. Pound out the verse with heavy guitars. Stress the end of each line with a crash cymbal, and then have harmony in the chorus. (EA)
Sniper Juice Records, 4853 N. Kilbourn, Chicago, IL 60630, www.shotbaker.com

Show Is The Rainbow, The – Barry Sure Wrote A Lot Of Songs About Girls He's Loved, CDEP

It takes chutzpah to start a one-man-band, especially if you opt not to imitate the greats: Atom, Cex, Har Mar, etc. The Show Is The Rainbow's Barry is up to the challenge. He's a versatile storyteller who can lay down a rock jam ("Nye2003") and a melancholy lullaby ("Down The Drain") in one EP. (EG)

Suckapunch Records, PO Box 83561, Lincoln, NE 68501, www.suckapunchrecords.com

Shut-Ups, The – It Hurts To Be Seen, CD

It was only a matter of time before retro bands would cover bad, '80s-style music. This touches upon post-disco to more danceable new wave stuff with some goofy lyrics with songs about "Day-glo Underwear" and "Stupid Sissy Boys." It's well done, but corny is still corny. (DM)

Imperial Fuzz, 3400 Stratford Road, Ste. 4205, Atlanta, GA 30326, www.imperialfuzz.com

Sick Lipstick, The – Sting Sting Sting, CD

A little-girl voice that reminds of The Cranes and Daisy Chainsaw slashes through fun but noisily distorted tunes with cute titles like "Cats Are Dangerous." Energetic, spunky and wild, The Sick Lipstick can sting a frantic buzz into your most static of moods. (SP)

Tiger Style Records, 401 Broadway, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10013-3005, www.tigerstylerecords.com

Silk Flowers – Not Worth Mentioning/I Love The Sea, 7"

Both of these tunes are perfect for muggy summer nights filled with nothing but memories and cheap beer. "Not Worth Mentioning" is a pretty little ditty with a quick, rockabilly beat and nostalgic vocals. "I Love The Sea" has a touch of Sam Phillips-style production and a mariachi ballad feel. (AJ)

Postneo Records, postneo@hotmail.com

Slick Shoes – Far From Nowhere, CD

Slick Shoes push ahead tirelessly with their mix of snap-crackle-pop drums and fast fingered, metal-influenced guitar solos. Slowing it down just enough with light vocal melodies and thoughtful chord progressions to draw in listeners. Well-balanced pop punk. (CC)

SideOneDummy Records, PO Box 2350 Los Angeles, CA 90046, www.sideonedummy.com

Slumber Party-3, CD

Simply haunting low-fi—and low key—rock that's reminiscent of the Spector-produced wall-of-sound girl groups of the '60s without being overly retro. Don't get me wrong, there's a *whole* lot of looking-back going on in these four women's sound, but there's something modern about the whole affair as well. The reverb-heavy brew the Slumber Party mixes up is well worth a big drink. (DS)

Kill Rock Stars www.killrockstars.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

DWARVES, *Blood Guts & Pussy*. This was garage rock at hardcore speed with guitars that sounded more like a swarm of bees than the Seeds. The requisite limited color vinyl pressings and Jack Endino production of most Sub-Pop releases at the time were in place, but *Blood Guts & Pussy* sounded like nothing else on the label. The Dwarves are like a prank-art stunt taken as far as possible. The lyrics had a certain, ill-advised swagger and managed to rise above a spat chorus of expletives designed to shock. While subsequent Dwarves albums have had increasingly extravagant—and frankly sterile—production, the *Blood Guts & Pussy* sound is the best suited to them. The drums are low in the mix, appropriate since they're basic punk rock, 4/4 *oompa-oompa* throughout. Bassist Salt Peter's gurgling playing drives the record, and his necessity to the Dwarves' sound is evidenced by the need to add a second guitar player for every Dwarves lineup since his departure. While pre-eminent Dwarve Blag Dahlia had yet to perfect his syphilitic Raymond Chandler lyrical style, it's hard not to sing along with "Give me AIDS/ Fuck me/ I just wanna get laid." No discussion of the album is complete without noting that it may very well have the greatest cover art in history: The naked women and a dwarf drenched in blood image may be enough evidence on its own to prove that the Dwarves are the punk-rock Spinal Tap. (RR)

Five more reasons to live: Charles Mingus, *Mingus Ah Um* 180 gram vinyl; Fleshes, *The Sicilian*; Drag the River, *Live At The Starlight*; Flamethrower, *S/T*; Minor Threat, *First Demo Tape 7"*.

Small Brown Bike – The River Bed, CD

Michigan mainstays return with another heartfelt melodic punk album. Take the best points of Hot Water Music, Braid, Jawbreaker and Cursive, and this is what you get. They've mastered all the tricks of the catchy punk sound: intricate guitars, the right amount of "emo" and outright catchiness. A fine record. (MG)

Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Snot Rockets, The – Bankrupt, CD

Just in case you can't tell from the name, the band with the best name ever play boring punk rock with lots of crazy guitar soloing and goofy lyrics. (KM)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

So Many Dynamos – Are We Not Drawn Onward To A New Era?, CDEP

Mix of experimental noise punk, dance music and arena rock. The individual parts, which sometimes work, don't come together to make an interesting whole. It all falls flat. Plus, the singer's voice really sucks. Whitebread as hell. (AJ)

Ambivalent Records, 5511 Louisiana Ave, St. Louis, MO 63111, www.ambivalent-records.com

Sonna – Smile And The World Smiles With You, CD

Instrumental music can be an acquired taste. Take Sonna: six long (four minutes to 10), atmospheric songs. They range from head-bobbing and catchy to mellow enough to be background music at a day spa. The playing is top-notch, but the mood pieces ("One Most Memorable" and "Smile") make me drowsy. (KR)

Temporary Residence, PO Box 11390, Portland OR 97211, www.temporaryresidence.com

Souls She Said – Rub The Sleep Out, CDEP

Five lo-fi rock 'n' roll tracks for your listening pleasure. The guys at Buddyhead do some good work, and I'll tell you what: I'd rather listen to this than The Hives or The Strokes and day of the week. Sincerity in music can go a long way. (DH)

Buddyhead, PO Box 1268, Hollywood, CA 90078, www.buddyhead.com

Soviettes, The – S/T, CD

Good ol' Billie Joe and Adeline Records must search the world for the best poppy rock bands. Keeping with a good Minnesota tradition (remember The Strike), The Soviettes bring you the pop with a good, Euro-feeling bite to it. Three gals on guitars and vocals and a guy on drums keep all 14 tunes in your face and full of communist rock! (BC)

Adeline Records, 5245 College Ave., #318, Oakland, CA 94618, www.adelinerecords.net

*** Spitalfield – Remember Right Now, CD**

I feared that moving to Victory would undermine the indie spirit that Spitalfield showed on their *The Cloak And Dagger Club EP*. While it's safe to say that those fears proved largely unfounded, *Remember Right Now* is nevertheless a disappointment of epic proportions. Spitalfield's brand of power-pop emo, which is certainly well-played and catchy, takes second place to the over-polished, slick production, which leaves the sound dry and lifeless. Gone is the slight abrasive-

ness that made Spitalfield's EP on Sinister Label so enjoyable. It is replaced instead by a radio-friendly sound that couldn't be counted on even to leave a scratch. Let's hope that this talented group regains their earlier form and that *Remember Right Now* proves easy enough to forget. (BN)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Squared Off – s/t, CDEP

Squared Off would be the perfect entertainment for a high-school kegger. They're loud enough to piss off the neighbors, fast enough to accommodate the homoerotic moshing maneuvers of the jock crowd and so uninteresting and derivative that you wouldn't mind missing their set to make a beer run. (AJ)

Earwaxfactory, 3414 Belden No. 1, Chicago, IL 60647, www.earwaxfactory.com

Stale Choffi – Post And Lintel, CD

Up-tempo, melodic punk with elements of skate and pop thrown in for good measure. The dual guitars create quite a buzz that the breakneck-pace drums and the alternating vocals fight to overcome. If you're tired of the same old shit, these guys might just freshen things up a bit. (BN)

Self-released, 1109 W. Taylor St. Chicago, IL 60607, www.stalechoffi.U4L.com

Starvations, The – One Long Night, CDEP

Horror honky-tonk? Slasher rockabilly? There's some high-flyin' playing here, especially the guitar work. I like the little offhand licks and harmonics thrown in during breaks and in the background, they give it a lot of depth. The vocals are heavily stylized, like a higher pitched Nick Cave. (DAL)

Kapow Records, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836, www.kapowrecords.com

*** Step Softly, Ghost – Ruined In Repetition, CD**

I reviewed this and Anatomy Of A Ghost, and they're both among my highlighted reviews. That's kind of—spooky. Heh, heh. Sorry. Actually, these guys don't mess around. They're not fronting with the ghost name; they really do sound supernatural, especially with the ethereal guitar work that sets you up for the explosive parts. It's a subtle point, but an important one, because it gives them a pretty original, distinctive sound. They take more risks with noise and form than most emo bands, but add more soul and warmth than most noise bands. If Sunny Day Real Estate veered more toward the punk end than the indie end, they might sound something like this. And hey, they're Midwestern (from Ft. Wayne, Ind.), and they've got heart, too. The sincerity and power is kind of infective. (DAL)

Anomer Records, 45 Oak Hill Drive #11, Belleville, IL 62223, www.anomerrecords.com

Stratford 4, The – Love & Distortion, CD

A very nice, dreamy, shoegaze album that is as much derivative from My Bloody Valentine space rock as it is from Britpop sounds and post-rock styles. Well done indie rock—bonus points for the crossover appeal. (MG)

Jetset Records, 67 Vestry St., New York, NY 10013, www.jetsetrecords.com

**Structure Of Lies / Misery Index – split, CDEP**

With exception to the poorly recorded live track, *Structure Of Lies* and *Misery Index* speed through a similar brand of chaotic metal. *Misery Index* is all speed and fury, whereas *Structure Of Lies* change things up slightly with some short, classic metal parts amongst their dual low vocal, caterwaul approach. (PS)

Deep Six Records, PO Box 6911, Berkeley, CA 94510, www.deepsixrecords.com

Strung Out – Live In A Dive, CD

Twenty-one songs (including a “Bark at the Moon” cover) of speedy pop-punk. I liked when they threw in part of Slayer’s “Angel of Death” during “In Harm’s Way” and the one *Strung Out* song that I really like (“The Exhumation Of Virginia Madison”) is on here. They call the crowd “motherfuckers” too much. (DH)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

Strung Up – S/T, 7”

Strong moshy hardcore that doesn’t stray from convention, particularly in the topics addressed in the lyrics: religion (bad), cops (bad), rich kids (bad), political correctness (bad) etc. Still, this is blazing, heavy, well played and well recorded. Breaking new ground? Hardly. Breaking noses in the pit? Definitely.

Blazing Guns Records, PO Box 40236, Downey, CA 90239, www.blazinggunsrecords.com

Stunt Monkey – S/T, CD

With mindless pop-punk songs about a lesbian girlfriend, MILFs, emo kids and other juvenile suburban concerns, *Stunt Monkey* are as mainstream-radio-friendly as they come. And really, pop punks making fun of emo kids? What a colossal waste of time, money and emotion. (GBS)

UTR Music Group, Inc., 3210 21st St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Suicide Machines, The – A Match And Some Gasoline, CD

Suburbia first introduced me to The Suicide Machines in 1996 when they were Jack Kevorkian and the Suicide Machines. A ska-core band that goes back and forth between hardcore tempos and sunny, mid ’90s So-Cal punk-ska beats, they haven’t changed much since I first heard them. (GBS)

Side One Dummy Records, PO Box 2350, Los Angeles, CA 90078, www.sideonedummy.com

Sullivan – Count The Time In Quarter Tones, CDEP

Radio-ready, summertime melodic pop-punk. Do you like Blink-182 and Midtown? I don’t. Completely by-the-numbers and not the least bit original. (JC)

Forsaken Recordings, PO Box 536, Pilot Mountain NC 27041, www.forsakenrecordings.com

Summer’s End – The Death Of Celeste Blue, CDEP

The majority of the song titles are girls’ names and are scrawled out on torn notebook paper. I could’ve easily never listened to this and written the same review: painfully cliché screamo gives way to sappy pop. What should be the final nail in emo’s casket. (PS)

Be Mine Records, PO Box 133, Franklin Park IL 60131, www.beminerrecords.com

*** Sun City Girls / Carl The Barber – split, 7”**

What the fuck? OK, side A is a noisy, lo-fi song that lasts the entire side. Side B is a recording of a barber at work entitled “Authentic Field Recording.” I think that it’s safe to say I’m proud to own a record in which one side is just a recording of a barber doing his job and cutting someone’s hair. Awesome. (DH)

I Don’t Feel A Thing, PO Box 858, Tempe, AZ 85280, www.idontfeelathing.com

Sunday Morning Einsteins – Det Ar Synd Om Dom Rike, 7”

Swedish hardcore that starts off chunky and then begins to flow really quickly and smooth, just like...hmm, maybe I need a new analogy. Even in the confines of the 7”, they have the strutting, dramatic quality that marks a lot of Swedish punk. It’s epic stuff. (DAL)

Prank Records, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892, www.prankrecords.com

*** Sunfactor – Original Motion Picture, CD**

Sufactor’s got something to prove. As 2000 rounded out, Sunfactor—who had helped build a formative post-hardcore scene in the UK—began to garner some notoriety. Unfortunately (or fortunately), a nine-month hiatus caused them to miss out on the emo explosion in the States and their chance at the next level of success. *Original Motion Picture* marks not only their full-length debut, but a fueled return. Sunfactor deftly layer clever guitar melodies, a dexterous rhythm section and lyrics so honest and wry in their delivery they make you flinch. But what’s so stunning about this record is not their ingenious sense of timing, melody and accessibility; instead, it’s their obvious aim to write the best songs they possibly could, and this album must come pretty damn close. (CC)

Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179, London E17 5FE UK, www.fireflyrecordings.com

Sunshine Blind – I Carry You, CD

Lush and dark, *I Carry You* is 12 songs of Portishead-ish discordant rock-pop. The record’s stand-out production value helps to highlight Sunshine Blind’s varied textures and rich melodies, and helps pick up where the singer’s voice sometimes falters. Especially strong tracks include “Snake Charmer” and “As Above, So Below.” (JG)

Underground, www.invisiblerecords.com

Supagroup – S/T, CD

Supagroup is an unabashed cock-rock band for the punks who got into music through AC/DC instead of the Ramones. I don’t understand adoration for bands like this within the underground. Wasn’t hatred for cock rock one of the reasons punk rock got started in the first place? (AE)

Foodchain Records, 8490 Sunset Blvd. Suite 504, West Hollywood, CA 90069, www.food-chainrecords.com

*** Superchunk – Cup Of Sand, 2xCD**

Chapel Hill mainstays Superchunk have released their third collection of singles and rarities, this one a whopping two CDs with 25 tracks. During the course of those songs, you really see the band’s progression over the past 10 years, and to be honest, the collection makes me a little

nostalgic. I’ve been disappointed with the past couple of Superchunk records, and hearing songs like “Her Royal Fisticuffs” and “The Majestic” makes me wistful for the days when Superchunk rocked out more. There’s even an acoustic version of my favorite Superchunk song ever, “Detroit Has A Skyline.” There are moments here of pure power-pop/punkish pop perfection, especially when the tempo’s a-movin’ briskly. Not that I don’t like their slower material; I always loved Superchunk’s dexterity with the slower songs (“A Small Definition”). Highlights of disc two include “Beat My Guest,” “Thin Air,” “Becoming A Speck” and the cover of Government Issue’s “Blending In.” What’s also great about this is the liner notes, which feature commentary from all four members of the band on each track. The discs don’t follow any sort of chronology from when the songs were recorded, so you might have a track 2001 bumping into one from 1992. Almost all of it’s great. Superchunk is a band to be celebrated. (KR)

Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Swindle – This Is Not A Test, CD

Best known for doing a split single with Blink-182, Swindle have been giving you mall-friendly punk for something like 10 years. With all the touring, *This Is Not A Test* is a tight collection of 14 tracks that the kids will love. (EA)

Slow Gun Records, 3365 E. Miraloma Ave. #206, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.slowgun-records.com

Tabula Rasa – The Role Of Smith, CD

This has all kinds of different influences, but at its core, it’s very much a rock record that sounds much too polished for my tastes. Still, it has enough rough edge to keep me interested, if only slightly. I keep on thinking of Burning Airlines—maybe because J. Robbins produced this. (KM)

A-F Records, PO Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.a-frecords.com

Team Emu – S/T, 7”

I really wanted to love this one because the press sheet they sent with it made me laugh, but this was light-hearted punk rock with vocals that sometimes reminded me of They Might Be Giants. Maybe this would benefit from a better recording? The vinyl was an awfully purty blue. (KM)

Ghostmeal Records, 707 Forest Heights Dr., Athens, GA 30606, www.ghostmeal.com

Tears, The – S/T, CD

Easily transcending all the recent rock-revival garbage, The Tears play rock ‘n’ roll with a late ’60s feel and the slightest traces of blues and pop. Pounding bass, dueling guitars, heavy drumming, male/female vocals; this is raw rock for fans of the old (Stooges) and the new (Von Bondies). (MG)

Trick Knee Productions, PO Box 12714, Green Bay, WI 54307, www.trickknee productions.com

Teen Idols – Nothing To Prove, CD

Follow this line—The Ramones, the Queers, Screeching Weasel—and you will eventually come across Teen Idols. Pogo punk with catchy

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

SAMIAM, S/T. A couple of weeks ago, I fulfilled a months-old promise to my fiancée to make a “best of” Samiam compilation. It was nearly 80 minutes long, so I had no problem finding good tracks from Samiam’s long career, which began with this record. Released in 1990 on New Red Archives, *Samiam* was 16 tracks of punk with loads of melody with the urgency of hard core. Catchy yet powerful, the sound epitomized ’90s punk, and Samiam’s style would be replicated thousands of times over by imitators. When I was growing up in Houston in the early ’90s, there was a period where every punk band sounded like Samiam: the dramatic build-ups (see “Underground,” “Speed” and “Stained Glass”), the dueling guitars (all tracks). Make no mistake: The guitar reigned supreme in Samiam. Sergie Loobkoff and James Brogan created a sound characterized by rapid-fire muting, interesting, contrasting parts, feedback and more. Vocalist Jason Beebout sang more than he yelled, finding an excellent balance without lazily relying on shouting to convey the point. The trio was Samiam’s core, as the band went through numerous bass players and drummers. This being the band’s first record, they hadn’t yet learned restraint; a couple of tracks could have easily been cut, and their ambition could be overbearing when the songs seemed to have too many parts. They eventually narrowed their focus, and Samiam is one of few bands that got better with each record. You can’t go wrong with anything they released.

In the CD changer: Criteria, *En Garde* (reviewed in this issue); Tsunami, *Deep End*; Cherrywine, *Bright Black*; Pavement, *Slanted & Enchanted Reissue*; Converge, *Jane Doe*.

hooks and accessible harmonies. On their fourth full-length, the Teen Idols remain adorable in their monotony and familiarity. Just don't come looking here for songs for the revolution. (GBS)

Fueled By Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

Ten Benson – Benson Burner, CD

Mainstream media love Ten Benson and their version of AC/DC. It's heavy and loud guitar-driven rock 'n' roll. It probably won't work for you if you are a regular reader of *Punk Planet*. (EA)

Jetset Records, 67 Vestry Street, NY, NY 10013, www.jetsetrecords.com

Terror Sheets, The – Street Corner Fields, CD

It's a tough trick to be precious and fey yet not sickeningly sweet, but the Terror Sheets manage it. The guitar, drums and keyboard trio craft atmospheric indie pop that gets a little same-y after a while, but it manages to avoid the cloying nature of so many similar bands. (RR)

Sad Robot Records, 5622 47th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98136-1407, www.sadrobotrecords.com

Textbook Traitors – You Pull The Strings That Make Us Dance, CDEP

Insanity! Milwaukee's answer to the Crimson Curse or Orchid thrashes through these six songs that were originally recorded as a demo. I don't know if it's accurate, but I read somewhere that these guys are only 16! Like I said before: INSANITY! This ferocious shit should not be passed up. (TK)

Magic Bullet Records, PO Box 2370, Merrifield, VA 22116, www.magicbulletrecords.com

* Three Butchers' Orchestra – Drag Me Twice, CD

Two full albums (*Golden Hits* and *In Glorious Rock'n'Roll*) from Brazil's Three Butcher's Orchestra all on one handy release. This is some of the most danceable rock that has ventured into my ears in a long time. Comparable to the quick paced sounds of The Hives, but with deeper roots in traditional rock 'n' roll. Their first release was widely considered in Brazil to be the country's best band of the year in 2001. Depending on what you know about the Brazilian music scene, you will probably agree. I do, but then again, I don't know shit. (TK)

No Fun Records, PO Box 8154, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8154, www.nofunrecords.com

These Arms Are Snakes – This Is Meant To Hurt You, CDEP

This Is Meant To Hurt You is a five-song EP featuring ex-members of Botch and Kill Sadie. Well written and performed late-generation emo with a little bite. It is on Jade Tree for a reason—you know what you are getting. The drums, captured by Matt Bayles, are outstanding. (EA)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kenwyn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

31Knots – It Was High Time To Escape, CD

Intricate and dense, 31Knots drones on at times, but you can't help but enjoy their intensity. This band is obviously a bunch of skilled musicians who have put a lot of thought into producing a well-structured, solid record. Highlights include "Without Wine" and the anthemic "We Still Have Legs." (JG)

50'40' or Fight!, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610-1601, www.fiftyfourfortyfight.com

This Day Forward – In Response, CD

Bands like this really make me wistful for EVR's old Krishna-core roster. The singer alternates between singing and screaming, neither with much passion. The music follows suit, chugging or distortion-free when needed. Polished emo metal that's probably better than most emo metal, if that floats your emo-metal boat. (NS)

Equal Vision, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

This Robot Life – Dead Letters of Intent, CD

Effectively avoiding any specific genre, but also avoiding any originality. Emo? Pop punk? It's all very average. Pick something and improve on it, guys. (TK)

Media Anemia Records, 1719 A North Arlington Place, Milwaukee, WI 53202, www.mediaanemia.net

Reruns: new reissues from punk's past.

D.O.A. – Something Better Change, CD

D.O.A.'s first full length from 1980 is an essential punk-rock platter. If you don't own the LP, it is time to get it digital. Coming from Canada, D.O.A. probably will never get the full recognition they deserve. Sudden Death Records has been releasing their early records to remedy the situation. (EA)

Sudden Death Records, Moscrop, PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC V5G 3H0, Canada, www.suddendeath.com

Gits, The – Frenching The Bully, CD

If you haven't heard The Gits' out-of-print first album yet, here is your chance. It's remastered and full of live and bonus tracks—no doubt worth adding to your collection. Fans should look out for the upcoming Gits movie and second release as well. (TK)

Broken Rekids, PO Box 460402, San Francisco, CA 94146-0402, www.brokenrekids.com

Global Holocaust / Obnoxious Race – split, CD

This here's a reissue of some studio and live stuff, originally only available on vinyl, by two mid-'90s Canadian punk bands. Both acts shared band members, and a somewhat simplistic, anticorporation, antidrug, environmentalist ideology. Of the two, Global Holocaust, with their grindcore riffs and unintelligible barked vocals, is the more intriguing. (AJ)

Tobacco Shit Records, 827 Goldbourn, Greenfield Park, QC J4V3H4, Canada, www.fade.to/gasworld

* Phantom Tollbooth – Beard Of Lightning, CD

This gets my vote just for interesting concept and execution. Basically, members of Phantom Tollbooth went back and erased the vocal tracks from their old album, *Power Toy*. Then Guided By Voices frontman Robert Pollard stepped in and added his new vocal tracks to the songs to create this interesting rerelease. I wasn't actually familiar with this band beforehand, so I'm not sure how the new vocals differ from the old, but this newer version sounds pretty good. The music resembles bands like firehose or the Meat Puppets. It pulses and pounds at times and grooves at others. Slightly funky, slightly rockin', slightly post-hardcore-sounding. Pollard's vaguely folksy voice clashes with, yet complements, the music in some odd way. It's like his voice keeps the music from meandering too far into chaos, though they had actually honed that skill about 15 years ago. I could imagine this band with a more hardcore or punk-styled singer, and I'd be interested to hear how the original vocals sounded. (NS)

Off Records, PO Box 82614, Portland, OR 97282-0614, www.offrecords.com

7 Angels 7 Plagues – Until the Day Breathes and Shadows Flee, CDEP

A remastered and reissued version of this late great band's demo. Three of the five songs ended up on their full-length, but these versions feature their first singer. If you don't have the demo or want to check out some more music from these guys, this is a good thing to have. (DH)

Uprising Records, PO Box 490, Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingsrecords.com

* Solger – Codex 1980, CD

Alleged to be Seattle's first HC band, these guys played a really gritty, raw and awful form of punk à la the Germs, but tougher. The funny thing about this CD is how the recordings are sectioned off: the "Good" part being their recorded material, digitally remastered for the first time; the "Bad" part being their last live show; and the "Horrendous" section is the actual recordings of Solger from the record to CD. Wow! It's mentioned here this is a highly sought-after record amongst collectors. Well, here's your "get out of buying this record" card. It's cool and all being a piece of punk history, but the original recordings of this are really shitty. Whatever, I'm a collector nerd, so I shouldn't make such statements. This is only for true shitty punk collectors and historians. (DM)

Empty Records, PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102, www.emptyrecords.com

Threats – Demos And Rarities, CD

Twenty-seven tracks taken from recording sessions of the Threats' early records. Even if you are lucky enough to own the vinyl, there is more here, making it more than a compilation of released material. Late '70s/early '80s British style punk. This could easily be in your "necessary" pile. (EA)

Doctor Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 90701, www.drstrange.com

* Thundertrain – Teenage Suicide, CD

Just in time for their first reunion show, Thundertrain rereleases the album that got them multiple interviews with *16 Magazine* back in the mid '70s! The idea that this band ever existed is hilarious, and the liner notes read like you are watching some unreleased interviews from the second installment of the *Decline Of Western Civilization* series. I honestly have a hard time believing that this just isn't a big joke. This shit is funnier than Spinal Tap! Newspaper clippings pictured in the insert have headlines like "The Only Ultra High Energy Crazy Rock act Thundertrain hosts their ONCE A YEAR NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY!" and a picture of the suicide note that was packaged with the original release that is timeless. I won't ruin it for you, though. Go out and buy this pre-cock rock glam album for the sake of owning it. Can you believe those bastards in Van Halen stole the song title "Hot For Teacher" from these guys? I was as shocked as you. (TK)

Gulcher Records, gulcherrecords@aol.com

Urban Waste – S/T, CD

Early NY HC band finally get a reissue of their classic seven-song EP. All '80s hardcore-lovers should own this disc, and this is the first time you can get it on CD. They are reforming to tour and record, like many other bands who broke up nearly 20 years ago. (EA)

Mad at the World, PO Box 20227, Tompkins Square Station, NY, NY 10009, www.matwrecs.com

V/A – Lookout! Records Punk Seven Inch CD Volume One 1988-1989, CD

This CD collects six Lookout Records 7-inches previously unavailable on CD from Corrupted Morals, Isocracy, Plaid Retina, Yeastie Girlz, Surrogate Brains, and Kamala & the Karnivores. This incredible and diverse reissue should serve as a crucial history lesson to dickheads that think all Lookout bands play wimpy "la la" core. (AE)

Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

**Thistle – Tired Anchor, CD**

The record has a melancholy streak, which contrasts the poppy nature of the music and the traditional structure of the songs. The album definitely grew on me, and I enjoyed decoding the religious references. There's an impressive emotional and musical range here, from straight indie rock to somber, acoustic droners. (DAL)

Tiberius Records, 4280 Catalpa Dr., Independence, KY 41051, www.tiberiusrecords.com

Thumbs Up – Building An Army, 7"

The well-dressed hipsters of the world may want to avoid Thumbs Up. On "Declaration Of War," they fantasize about a "black hair dye genocide." Otherwise, Thumbs Up plays meat n' potatoes positive hardcore. (RR)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Threads, The – Five Stabs To The Throat, CDEP

Take the vocal styles and technical abilities of At The Drive-In and add that to the rambunctiousness of the Blood Brothers, throw in some weird science-fiction keyboard sounds, and this is what you'll get. As tired as this style of chaotic punk seems lately, I really like this record. (MG)

Phantoms Records, 5142 Towle Court, San Diego, CA 92105, www.phantomrecords.com

This Moment in Black History – The Cleveland Finger, CDEP

Proclaimed as "Cleveland's newest Superstar Art Project" with members of Neon King Kong, The Bashholes, The Chargers Street Gang and Whatever. With this line-up, you can expect some loud and fast rock to shake your ass. If that's what you were expecting, you were correct. (TK)

Exit Stencil Recordings, PO Box 110775, Cleveland, OH 44111, www.exitstencilrecordings.com

*** This Is My Fist – I Don't Want To..., 7"**

Shit, I put this 7" on and loved it without even realizing that the lead vocals and guitar were being handled by a long-lost pal, Annie (The Mushuganas, Ambition Mission), who was the merch babe on our last Oblivion tour. She does a great job in singing (sounds kinda like a raspy version of Cinder from Tilt). Four cuts of some damn fine rock and punk 'n' roll or whatever the kids in California are calling it today. Cool! (BC)

Left Of The Dial, PO Box 3941 Oakland, CA 94609, www.leftofthedial.net

Tiger Shovel Nose – S/T, 7"

These two songs from this Japanese trio will have you hopping around your turntable like someone lit your shoes on fire. Even the cover art has

me wanting to dance. At first I thought I had it on the wrong speed, but it *is* supposed to be played at 45 rpm. This is just so damn great. (TK)

I Don't Feel A Thing, PO Box 858, Tempe, AZ 85280, www.idontfeelathing.com

Tokyo Rose – Reinventing A Lost Art, CD

Tokyo Rose is a surprisingly likable emo-pop band from Jersey, delivering a quality debut full-length here. The drums are punchy and distinct, and the backing vocals are tastefully mixed down. They're a band that knows they're cheesy, so they include enough meat and condiments to cover up the cheddar. (AE)

Sidecho Records, 1215 N. Red Gum Ste. L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.sidecho.com

*** Tora! Tora! Torrance! – A Cynics Nightmare, CD**

I figured I should praise this release in case Tora! Tora! Torrance! hit it big—then I can prove in print that I was hip to them before they became the next Strokes or Hives or whoever. This disc has chops and balls to keep *A Cynics Nightmare* from becoming another art band, emo band or post-something band. You can appreciate the color and alertness of the whole package; in fact, it's the only disc this month that I can say the artwork had more than five minutes of work put into it. More bands should realize that yes, it is the music, but we do love to hold your book in our hands and read the lyrics late at night. All the tracks on this disc shake, except for the last song, which is an eight-minute-plus artsy, slow piece of crap that could help lull you to sleep after dancing through the record. I suppose they took a cue from their Minnesota predecessors Hüscher Dü (you do own *Zen Arcade*?) on this one. (EA)

The Militia Group, 1215 N. Red Gum Ste. L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themilitiagroup.com

Toral, Rafael – Electric Babyland/Lullabies, CD

Extremely minimal and experimental in nature, these atmospheric pieces are composed by using a music box and analog electronics. Each track is very gentle and long-winded; breezy sounds are stretched out underneath music-box tinkering and random noises. Fit for those who are more experimental/audio-art inclined. (MG)

Tomlab Records, c/o Tom Steinle, Bismarck str. 70, 50672 Köln, Germany, www.tomlab.com

Toys That Kill – Control The Sun, CD

More famous for featuring former members of FYP, Toys That Kill should overshadow said band now. Their sophomore effort is a sonic blast of pop and punk sensibilities. Todd and the gang along with Sweatbox studios have created 15 new singalong songs. (EA)

Recess Records, PO Box 1666 San Pedro, CA 90733, www.recessrecords.com

Transistor Transistor – Mannequin, 7"

Fast as hell, shoddily recorded mess of guitars and hard-core screaming...archetypal of that sort of thing...nice cover art though. (SP)

Redscroll Records, 5 Arbor Lane, Wallingford, CT 06492, www.redscroll.com

Travoltas, The – Endless Summer, 12"

Snazzy little pop punk numbers with a strong Beach Boys influence, The Travoltas sound like they're in three-chord heaven. Highlights include "Lori," a '50s pop ditty about a girl who kills her boyfriend, and "One For The Road," an anthemic ode to life in a tour van. What's not to like? (JG)

Fastmusic, www.fastmusic.com

Treephort – Buy This Album Or The Terrorists Win, CD

Treephort considers itself a nerdcore band, but they sound more like a generic college-rock band that never took anything seriously. Check out "Sunday School," "I Was Born...", and "Steve F-ing Perry." This shit is funny, and the AWK influence makes it even better. (GBS)

Brand Name Records, PO Box 17533, Atlanta, GA 30316, www.brandnamerecords.com

Twin Wrecks The Memory / Jesus And The Devil – split, 7"

"Today I feel Like California/ high in the hills and out of order" Insert Jon Stewart confused face here: Wuhn???? The music follows the same pattern, kind of standard indie-rockish, but with some unusual experimental elements. For genre die-hards who are willing to give it a bunch of listens. (DAL)

Fudge Sickness Records, PO Box 7052, Villa Park, IL 60181, fudgesickness@yahoo.com

Trouble With Sweeney, The – I Know You Destroy, CD

Finally, pop songs for witty geeks. *I Know You Destroy* is a musical chapbook with each track's story as integral as its sound. Finely honed narratives about broken hearts and self-sabotage lead nearly impeccable arrangements that swagger with country and new wave. Eleven tracks for us smartass sad bastards. (CC)

Burnt Toast Vinyl, PO Box 42188, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.burntoastvinyl.com

True Swamp Neglect – Sleep Function Lost, CD

The opener starts off with an awkward solo singer-guitarist sounding like a discombobulated, southern Lou Barlow. But then the rest of the band kicks in, and the rest of the album becomes a fascinating blend of loops and noise and very simple rock songs that remind me a bit of The Fall. (DAL)

Superglider Records, www.superglider.com

Demo-lition Derby: CD-Rs

..And the Saga Continues – The Sinister 3, CDR

This threesome out of Canada play some speedy hardcore that reminds me of Infest on an off day. Quick, punchy, but a bit too underdeveloped. Give 'em some time and a better recording and we can talk again. (DH)

Steve Musil, 2285 Girouard, Apt. 17, Montreal Q.C., H4A 3C4, Canada

Black Box – S/T, CDR

Straight-up old school hardcore with a dash of speed and a pinch of the slightly more modern "skate" sound that has been brought about by bands like Tear It Up and What Happens Next? (DH)

www.laidoffrecords.com

Combat Junkies, The – Fight Or Die, CDR

A metal-tinged Christian punk band, The Combat Junkies are tight and intense musically. Lyrically,

they are "raising up an army against Satan who threatens to destroy us." (DAL)

No contact information provided

Complicated Shirt – S/T, CD

This band has one song about the characteristics of "white trash" and another song called "Unanimous Gang Rape." I really hope this is a joke, because if not, it ruins an otherwise fine punk record. (JG)

www.complicatedshirt.com

Cupcake Larry – S/T, CDR

Am I being punished for something I don't know about? Weird, ambient, stream-of-consciousness noise interspersed with freakish stoner rock. Put down the pipe, dude. (JD)

Self-released, www.geocities.com/cupcakelarry

Days Of This – The Way Out, CDR

The vocalist sounds like he was bred on early '90s "heavy" metal (i.e., Alice In Chains). The songs, however, are fairly memorable if not exactly fresh. (SP)

www.daysofthis.com

Enter Arcadia – The Bip On The Screen EP, CDR

Imitation is said to be the highest form of flattery. Blink 182 and Bad Religion must be very, very flattered. (GBS)

<http://enterarcadia.qib.net>

Hominid – S/T, CDR

Dissonant melodies and quirky, bass-fueled rhythms rumble inside of buzzing and cooing vocals and still make room for the best kind of booty shakin' beat—freaky. (CC)

www.hominidband.com

Jacurutu 3 – Blue Evolution, CDR

Straight outta tha bedroom, hip hop by way of goth rock. Danzig samples and radio spoofs make for a decent novelty. (PS)

3727 N. Route 42, Waynesville, OH 45068, www.geocities.com/jacurutu3

Los Griswolds – S/T, CDR

When this band first formed in 1994, their punkabilly sound must've been hot shit. Ten years later it just sounds tired and corny. (CC)

www.luckyx26.com

Los Hermanos Rodriguez – LHR, CDR

L.H.R.'s quirky vocal harmonies, penchant for trebled-out surf guitar and no-frills approach to rock 'n' roll is smart and fun. My new favorite party band. (CC)

UK Subs – Staffordshire Bull, CD

Live CD of the UK Subs taken from the 2002 Lichfield Rock and Pop Festival. The sound is below average for a large concert. This release is almost last in releases that you should get by this band. Only die-hard fans should apply. (EA)

Invisible Hands Music, 15 Chalk Farm Road, London NW1 8AG, England, UK, www.invisible-hands.co.uk

Ultimate Fakebook – Before We Spark, CDEP

Radio-ready pop rock that probably thinks it's matured, but it's only grown a little less cute. Still writing semicatchy rock songs and still using those annoying falsetto vocals for effect, these guys aren't horrible, but it seems like a lot of posturing. Seven songs and some bonus multimedia material. (NS)

Initial, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Ultimate Warriors, The – Our Gimmick Is Wrestling, 12"

From Nazareth, Pa., this hardcore band has a wrestling theme and must be hilarious live. Fans of campy hardcore revival will love this LP, with song titles including "Teddy Ruxpin Crew Moshed To Oblivion." It also bears the commendable distinction of being a vinyl-only release in this overly digital age. (AE)

Doppelganger Records, 803 Saint John St., Allentown, PA 18103

Unicorns, The – Unicorns Are People, Too, CD

Trippy, looped out bedroomcore that sounds like a bunch of friends goofing off with a Casio keyboard and a guitar souped up with some tape tricks. They have an admirable ability to create haunting, intoxicating sounds out of not much music, but it's so lo-fi there's not much meat. (DAL)

Self-released, the_unicorns@hotmail.com

Unwed Sailor – The Marionette And The Music Box, CD

The idea of this concept instrumental release is to serve as the soundtrack to an illustrated book involving the meeting of a marionette and a music box. It tastefully uses sound effects, a wide array of instruments and a beautiful booklet of paintings representing the accompanying action. (AE)

Burnt Toast Vinyl, PO Box 42188, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.burnttoastvinyl.com

USAISAMONSTER – Masonic Chronic EP, 12"

A duo of marijuana enthusiasts playing what they call "psychedelic punk," which I guess means droning math-rock with a solar calcula-

tor in a dark room. Not so much about songs as the racket, the riffs and the reefer. (JC)

Infrasound Records, PO Box 382163, Cambridge MA 02238, www.infrasound.org

Vagiants, The – Short And Hard, CD

Balls-to-the-wall hot-rod punk rock with girl vocals. Predictably, *Short And Hard* features several songs with names like "Nice And Easy," "Sugarmama" and "Hot Box." What's that one about? (JG)

Sin Klub Entertainment, PO Box 2507, Toledo, OH 43606, www.sinklub.com

Vera Deirdre – Become Flesh, CD

This spooky tunes played by this trio have grown on me. They borrow elements from folk, lounge and old-school blues with a female crooning that will either give you the willies or turn you on. Instrumentation includes bass, brushed drums, guitar and clarinet. Not for everyone. (DM)

Bottled Recordings, PO Box 11495 Milwaukee, WI 53211, www.bottledrecordings.com

Verse – Four Songs, CDEP

Verse features ex-members of What Feeds The Fire and boasts on its promo material that they have a song on a comp spearheaded by none other than John Porcell (Judge! Youth of Today!). Their straightforward brand of earnest hardcore is admirable, but I didn't hear anything unique in their sound. (JD)

Contrast Records, PO Box 2492, Providence, RI 02906, www.contrastrecordstore.com

Vibrators, The – Live: Near The Seedy Mill Golf Club, CD

Well, they've been playing music longer than I have been alive, and they haven't changed a bit. They are still the pogo-punks who supported the Sex Pistols back when they were hated by the majority of society. This CD is a live recording of both recent and classics. (TK)

Invisible Hands Music Limited, 15 Chalk Farm Road, London NW1 8AG, England, www.invisiblehands.co.uk

*** Vaughn, Viktor – Vaudeville Villain, CD**

I've always been a fan of MCs that sound like they're rhyming with food in their mouth (RZA, Notorious B.I.G.). Enter Viktor Vaughn (a.k.a. MF Doom) with his newest solo offering. Mixing hilarious lines ("I'm outta' here as soon as I fix the flux capacitor") and blazing production from King Honey, Heat Sensor and Max Bill, we have a frontrunner for best hip-hop release of the summer. I've never even heard of the aforementioned producers until now, but needless to say, I'm going to keep my ear to the ground for them in the future. Once again, RJD2

pops up where you don't necessarily expect him for another funk-inspired banger that I'd keep in rotation should I be a club DJ one day. Support this label and pick this up immediately! (DH)

Sound Ink, www.sound-ink.com

Voices Underwater – S/T, CD

Godspeedyoublackemperor! are immensely popular with the indie folks, so it's no surprise that their influence of dramatic dynamics would cross over to the four-person rock-band format. The songs drive through engaging shifts, but fail to garner the grandiose sound they intend and suffer from typical indie-rock stylings. (VC)

Action Driver, PO Box 610, Toledo, OH 43697, www.actiondriver.com

Votolato, Rocky – Light And Sound, CDEP

Waxwing vocalist Rocky Votolato has one of those beautifully perceptive voices that makes your skin crawl into the closet (in search of a security blanket). One listen to this EP and there's no doubting Votolato's talents. The music veers toward the melancholy while remaining genuine enough to escape annoying "emo" labeling. Gorgeous. (SP)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084, Kansas City, MO 64141-3084, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

*** Weakerthans, The – Reconstruction Site, CD**

Listening to the Weakerthans is like getting a postcard from the future. It's just a matter of time before frontman Jon Sampson receives some big-time recognition as one of the best lyricists of our time, so everything leading up to that moment feels like you're listening on borrowed time. The Weakerthans is one of those bands that to like is to love, to feel possessive about, to not want to share, yet always knowing that that there's a time just around the bend when you will have to play nice. And so as a result, getting a new Weakerthans album is a bittersweet experience—its beauty, smarts, and warmth just let you know that you're growing ever closer to the inevitable. All that said, if any band deserves this fate (and hopefully, in all the best ways), it's the Weakerthans. Their cool pop hooks, coupled with Sampson's smart, literate, risk-taking words (take "Plea From a Cat Named Virtue" for instance: the whole song is written from the point of view of a cat) make for yet another amazing record. Easily their most accessible record—due in large part to the sparkingly clean production—*Reconstruction Site* may be the one. Or maybe not. Either way, it's just a matter of time—why not enjoy the ride? (DS)

Epitaph Records www.epitaph.com

1814 Monroe St. NW, Washington, DC 20010

Mile High – Demo, CDR

Promising punk-influenced power pop. Songs like "Letter to Bob Stinson" give an indication of where they're coming from. The review request on the back of a questionnaire for a Generalized Anxiety Disorder study was genius-ass shit. (RR)

PO Box 26098, Philadelphia, PA 19128, wiltzine@aol.com

Paraffin Section – S/T, CDR

Strident noise with stop and go melodies that pierce with bloodthirsty, screaming male vocals. Unrecognizable lyrics, but when they're slower and sweeter, they hit harder and go farther. (SP)

www.paraffinsection.shoegaze.net

Pullout! – How To Lose Friends And Alienate People, CDR

Fantastic demo EP of aggressive, Crimpshrine-styled pop, which is much more exciting than any label-issued pop-punk release I've heard in awhile. (AE)

527 Fourth Ave., Lindenwold, NJ 08021, www.pulloutpullout.com

RedRover – Singles, CDEP

It may not be revolutionary, but RedRover play solid, sweet, punk love songs. *Singles* is worthy of a make-out session or two. (CC)

70 Tilt St., Haledon, NJ 07508, www.redroveronline.com

Royal City – Alone At The Microphone, CDR

Vocals that manage to be bright and smiley and kind of weepy all at the same time pour syrup over slick, country-themed pop. (DAL)

No contact information given

Stella – 4 Songs, CDR

Raw and complicated, Stella sounds like a less cleaned-up and harder version of All. Warning: misplaced usage of piano on one of the songs. (AE)

Stellarockhard@yahoo.com

Tao – The Intermediate Present, CDEP

Six tracks of melodramatic rock with whiny, bedroom vocals. Tao would benefit from taking themselves less seriously. (CC)

www.taoband.cjb.net, www.universalconstantrecords.com

Unverified – Promo Sampler, CDR

Likeable demo of two bubblegum pop songs. CMJ hilariously noticed the band because the rag had been charting unknown bands as "unverified" for years. (AE)

www.cmj.com/certaindamage/130

Welcome Home, Nemo! – S/T, CDR

Low-fi kiddie tunes/noise collages created by one dude, his guitar, his sampler and his warped imagination. A

few shining moments filter through the mess. (AJ)

Friends And Relatives Records, PO Box 23, Bloomington, IN 47402, friendsandrelativesrecords@yahoo.com

Yellow Press, The – S/T, CDR

This is very frantic yet rhythmic punk rock with a danceable beat. This four-song EP goes by too quickly. The raw recordings complements the music. (DM)

735 Fathom #37 San Mateo, CA 94404, www.theyellowpress.com

V/A – Darkside For Life #2, CDR

CR-R comp sampler of various types of hardcore, ranging from the edges of grindcore to melodic hardcore. This is actually a really good collection. (AE)

Darkside For Life, rswope@slayerized.com



When Dreams Become Nightmares / v/a Experiments in Audio Rocketry

When Dreams Become Nightmares – Lucid, CDEP

Very typical metalcore with death-metal guitar licks, chug-heavy mosh breakdowns, screamy/growling vocals and some gentle, acoustic parts mixed throughout. At times very brutal, at other times very sweet, but still I've heard it a hundred times before. (MG)
40Hz Records, 828 Royal St. #413, New Orleans, LA 70116, www.40hzrecords.com

Whistle Jacket – Rainy Day Sunshine, CD

Whistle Jacket's press release tried to convince me that I'd be listening to 15 touching, bittersweet pop songs. Their recipe for pop certainly has moments of inspired whimsy, but I could only handle the screechy, Billy Corgan-esque vocals in tiny doses. (JD)
Centre St. Tracks, PO Box 497, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, www.centrestetracks.com

* Whitmore, William Elliot – Hymns For The Hopeless, CD

Call it what you will, "alternative country," "neo-bluegrass" or "delta blues," but William Elliot Whitmore's *Hymns For The Hopeless* is truly the epitome of "soul music"—music that speaks to, about and for the human condition. This album is an extremely impressive mixture of haunting murder ballads, hoodoo blues shuffles and hopeless sinner laments, all propelled by Whitmore's gruff, world-weary voice and bare-bones instrumentation (banjo, slide guitar and the occasional handclaps, tambourine and organ). All the songs have a time worn, Southern Gothic quality. The astonishing "Pine Box" sounds like an old Stanley Brothers tune, and "Does Me No Good" and "Sometimes Our Dreams Float Like Anchors" could've spawned from the experiences of a nomadic bluesman during The Reconstruction. The title kind of says it all. These are truly hymns for the hopeless: songs of praise, faith, and longing for those struggling souls devoid of easy answers or paths to earthly fulfillment. (AJ)

Southern Records, PO Box 57375, Chicago, IL 60657, www.southern.com

Wide Right – S/T, CD

The biggest selling point: Jim Diamond of Detroit's Ghetto Recorders worked on this. Second best selling point: Leah Archibald's lyrics and delivery. A woman stuck in northern lower class living, she sounds like she who would die without a chance to live the rock 'n' roll life on this disc. (EA)

Pop Top Records, 172 Fifth Ave., PMB 24, Brooklyn, NY 11217, www.poptoprecords.com

Witchcraft By A Picture – S/T, CDEP

This CD comes with a little ouija board as the insert. The music isn't quite as interesting as the packaging, though. Screamo with eerie organ parts and awkward lyrics. I don't know if Ptolemy is singalong material. This has its moments, but for me, five songs are more than enough. (NS)

Magic Bullet, PO Box 2370, Merrifield, VA 22116, www.magicbulletrecords.com

With Resistance – S/T, CD

Melodic metalcore in the style of early Grade and Poison The Well, but stylized by some Botch-like technical, noisy madness. Well done. (MG)
Immigrant Sun, PO Box 150771, Brooklyn, NY 10013, www.immigrantsun.com

Witmer, Denison – Recovered, CD

Denison Witmer, whose original releases on Burnt Toast Vinyl I have already applauded, is back with a covers album. He does an admirable job of turning some of '70s classics into softly strummed acoustic cuts. His take on Leonard Cohen's "Suzanna" and Carole King's "So Far Away" top the list. (BN)

Fugitive Recordings, PO Box 95556, Seattle, WA 98199, www.fugitive recordings.com

World Leader Pretend – Fit For Faded, CD

Melodic and mellow, almost too much so. If you're not careful, you might fall into a nap while this is on. Reminiscent of older, lesser Radiohead with lots of falsetto singing. The standout track was "Shape-shifter," which doesn't sound like the rest of the slow record. (AA)

Renaissance Records, 6221 S. Claiborne Ave., Ste. 309, New Orleans, LA 70125

X27 – Your New Favourite Band, CD

It is pretty evident that this band used to set up shop (so to speak) in Chicago. They have that workshop-type, distorted and heavy as hell feel to all of their instruments. The dual gender vocal duties and mature sound bring to mind Sonic Youth for sure. (BC)

Namack Records 381 Broadway, NY, NY 10013, www.namackrecords.com

Yesterday's Ring – Once Chansons Pour Faire Pleurer Les Morts-Vivants

Oh, I have an idea: How about we produce a record of folk-punk songs and sing everything in French 'cause we're soooooo fucking cool? Wait, what's that? Yesterday's Ring is a side-project of the Montreal punk band The Sainte Catherine's. They actually understand French? Makes one of us. Catchy and understated acoustic tracks. This deserves more than a couple of listens. (JG)

Dare to Care, PO Box 463, Str. C, Montreal, QC, H2L 4K4, Canada, www.daretocarerecords.com

* Young Antiques, The – Clockworker, CD

Even though I'm not crazy about the name, I really like this bar-band-sounding trio quite a bit. One moment, they're rocking out, the next they're playing a mellow tune that still remains upbeat. The YA's definitely have pop sensibility while remaining a true rock group. *Clockworker* is a homage to bands of yesteryear, like The Replacements and early Soul Asylum. While having an older sound, these guys still keep it fresh and alive. From beginning to end, these songs are raw, but not overly gritty. Even though this release may not be considered to be a "punk" record by some due to its rock leanings, this is a pretty solid record that shouldn't be ignored. I'll be drinking to this one with my friends wondering when the YA's will make their way to Boston. Awesome! (DM)

Two Sheds Music, PO Box 5455 Atlanta, GA 31107, www.twoshedsmusic.com

Your Halo Is A Radar – S/T, CD

You have to admire any band whose press sheet says "music that is at first glance annoying and just a bit too loud." You've really got to love a band whose bass player is named Jorgen Bang. They're abrasive and a little sloppy, but they're Swedish, and they rock. This record has got some great fist-pumping moments. (DAL)

Mom Pop, 4829 N. Goldenrod Road – A, Winter Park, FL 32792, www.mompoprecords.com

Zelda & The Unibrows – Greens, CD

The first half of this album is composed from parts of a found cassette tape that was something of an audio letter. The second half is a space-rock opera formed by expanded improv pieces. Weird and quirky songs/pieces with lots of wacky instrumentation (accordion, oscillators, bassoon, oboe, synthesizer). (MG)

Self-released, Box 485, Fraser, MI 48026, www.unibrows.com

V/A – Contaminated 5.0, 2xCD

A mostly strong offering of what Relapse has to offer these days. Stand out tracks from Human Remains, Pig Destroyer, High On Fire, Employer Employee and a live Dillinger Escape Plan song. Worth it for the five or so bucks it'll run you. (DH)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapserecords.com

V/A – Decide On Change, a Hardcore-Punk Benefit Compilation, 12"

Twelve bands rip through 20 songs for the benefit of the NYC More Gardens Coalition, which sounds like a very worthwhile cause in the informative liner notes. On the vinyl, Scholastic Deth, Self-Defense, Balance of Terror and Last Security all stood out and wasted my brain. (JC)

Mountain Collective For Independent Artists, PO Box 220320, Brooklyn NY 11222

V/A – Dirty Faces Vol. 1, CD

A German label comp with bands from Europe and the U.S., including DF 94 P.A.I.N., NY Rel-X, Antidote and Bad News. This is a pretty good comp, mostly showcasing dirt punk with some ska. Twenty-five tracks for 5€ or \$5, not too shabby. Go explore. (DM)

Dirty Faces/Schallplatten, Universitätsstr 16 44789 Bochum, Germany, www.dirtyfaces.de

V/A – Don't Name It, CD

A collection of "beautiful, nasty, confusing" St. Louis bands. They sum themselves up pretty well, actually, though I'm giving them the benefit of the doubt on the beautiful part. The tracks range from droning noise to chaotic pseudo-free jazz. Includes groups like Jesus And The Flaming Tacos and Grandpa's Ghost. (DAL)

Nihilist Records, 2046 N. California St., Chicago, IL 60647

* V/A – Experiments In Audio Rocketry: A Mostly Acoustic Compilation, CD

Experiments In Audio Rocketry is a novel collection that can't quite hold a consistent acoustic, or merely nondistorted, tone. Maybe the acoustic approach would work if it were consistent here, instead of relying on the novelty of punk bands like NOFX and Kevin Seconds going quiet. Opening with the acoustic gutter basement splendor of Against Me! and closing with This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb, the bookends outshine the content of the shelf (save for the Ann Beretta's cover of Joe Strummer's "X-Ray Style" and the Lawrence Arms tune). Undistorted outtakes ("Whoops, I Od'd"), acoustic demos (Jesse Michaels' "The Bell Tower") and sappy, predictable, ballads (Kevin Second's "Life Get Sadder") make this a collector's comp for fans of said bands, not an acoustic experiment. At least Against Me!, who tapped the spirit of a thousand acoustic players and street wandering

Reviewer Spotlight: George B. Sanchez (GBS)

BILLY BRAGG & WILCO: *Mermaid Avenue*. Every time I hear that first beat of Ken Croomer's kick drum on "Walt Whitman's Niece," my heart warms. A soaring call and response blues that bounces with every snare snap and bass drum boom, *Mermaid Avenue's* lead track (and the rest of the album) breathes new life into the legacy of Woody Guthrie, one of North America's greatest troubadours, while avoiding all the pitfalls of a typical tribute record. If you've ever listened to the wonderfully scratchy *Dust Bowl Ballads* or *Struggle*, you know that, while Guthrie's lyrics soared with emotion and brilliance, his limited, often one dimensional, guitar playing marooned his songs to a folk-music ghetto. But this unlikely collaboration of Billy Bragg, Wilco, Natalie Merchant and Corey Harris, as orchestrated by Woody's daughter, Nora, resuscitates all that was Woody Guthrie: the bittersweet ("At My Window Sad And Lonely" and "Another Man's Done Gone"), the joyful ("Hoodoo Voodoo" and "California Stars") and the honest ("I Guess I Planted," "She Came Along To Me" and "The Unwelcomed Guest"). Between Jeff Tweedy and Jay Bennett's subtle ear for layer and texture (the swaggering cadence of "California Stars" still kills me) and Bragg's keen eye for Guthrie gems (give "Ingrid Bergman" a spin and try not to smile), *Mermaid Avenue* is folk without the camp, pop without the toothache and musical growth that was, honestly, unexpected. Now that Anti-Flag and Dropkick have been given access to Woody's lyrical archives, just remember where it all started.

Tambien en La Casa: Los Crudos, *Discografia*; Lucero, *The Attic Tapes* (see review above); Naked Raygun, *Basement Screams* (reissue); The Weakerthans, *Reconstruction Site*; Townes Van Zandt, *For the Sake of the Song*.

panhandlers before them, represent the acoustic sound in all its possible strength, reveling in the scream and full strum where most tend to mute their strings. Just because it's acoustic doesn't mean it has to be quiet. Nice try, though. (GBS)

1-2-3-4 Go Records, 420 Wall Street #206, Seattle, WA 98121, www.1234gorecords.com

V/A - Guitar Ace: Link Wray Tribute, CD

FUCK PETE TOWNSEND! LINK WRAY INVENTED THE POWER CHORD! If you don't know Link, you should. This pretty straight-forward tribute is as best a place as any to get acquainted with the one lunged, power-chord wonder that rocked "Rumble" a full 20 years before the summer of '77. (GBS) Music, PO Box 1757, Burbank, CA 91507, www.musicrecords.com

V/A - Home On The Range, Vol.2, CD

What is it about regional comps that'll make you hate a place you've never been? This awkward mix of punk, noise, pop and rubbish is probably an accurate representation of Montana and Wyoming's music scene, but the array of mediocre bands makes me sad for the people who live there. (CC)

The Bingo Lady Record Collective/Eleven11, 119 N. Broadway, Billings, MT 59101, www.eleven11.net

V/A - I Wear My Heart On My Sleeve, CD

A handout comp of many different genres from punk, grind, noise, hxc and more from outside of the Maryland area. A lot of heart, despite lacking quality, but an "A" for effort. Keep the scene alive, Ryan! (DM)

DFL Records, 1048 Hampton Circle Hagerstown, MD 21742, ryan.swope@myactv.net

* V/A - Let's Get Rid Of L.A., CD

There's definitely something worthwhile going on in the ass-end of the Golden State. This isn't a multiband compilation record so much as it's a document of a very vibrant scene. Forget what you know (or think you know) about Los Angeles area punk rock. If *Let's Get Rid Of L.A.* is any indication (and 15 very good, very disparate bands and a 40-plus page zine/booklet is a good indication), all of your assumptions will need to be jettisoned post haste. The music in question comes from Los Angeles County and Los Angeles' not-really-suburb-so-much-as-autonomous-growth Orange County. Said music is played by bands with members ranging from one to six, all playing some variation of punk: soul punk, roots punk, poppy punk, art punk, new wave, etc. Somehow all 15 bands mix perfectly (good mastering and sequencing not hurting the cause) while maintaining their individuality. Some of the highlights include the soul-cowboy Clash-rock of the Alleged Gunmen, the full-tilt soul of the Flash Express and

the Fusel, the garage trash of Lipstick Pickups and the Rolling Blackouts, and the art attack of Squab and Fast Forward. (RR)

Revenge Records, 5835 Harold Way #203, Los Angeles, CA 90028 / Star Map Records, PO Box 639, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

V/A - Liberation: Songs To Benefit PETA, CD

The good (NOFX, Anti-Flag, Propagandhi, Hot Water Music) meet the bad (Goldfinger, Good Charlotte, Midtown), the in-betweens (The Faint, Big Wig, Story Of The Year) and a few others on this compilation to benefit PETA. The song selection isn't very good, but your money benefits a good cause. Your call. (BN)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, www.fatwreck.com

V/A - Neon Meats Dream Of A Octafish: A Tribute To Captain Beefheart, CD

Mike Watt, Jad Fair, Don Fleming, Race Bannon, Truman's Water, Old Time Religion and 14 other bands do their interpretations of Captain Beefheart tunes. It's probably difficult to cover the free-form, jazzy rock style of Beefheart, but most of these bands do a pretty good job. (NS) Animal World, 122 Morfolk St., #26, New York, NY 10002, www.animalworldrecordings.com

V/A - Nice Guys Finish Last, CD

The bands on this compilation are of the "pop punk" variety. I won't be surprised if any one of them becomes an MTV staple. Standout tracks include: "Cautionary Tale" by Cruiserweight, "Pennsylvania" by Anchor Set and, the heaviest tune on the album, "Santa Ana" by In Reverent Fear. (AJ)

Nice Guy Records, PO Box 42815, Cincinnati, OH 45242-0815, www.niceguyrecords.com

* V/A - Psycho-Logical Presents: Street Villains Vol. 1, CD

Should people that protest against Eminem discover that their children could order a CD from this label by clicking their mouse a few times on the family computer, they would surely go into shock. What we have here is the newest release from Psycho-Logical Records featuring new tracks and freestyles from Necro, Ill Bill and a few other labelmates over jacked beats from mainstream artists. The lyrics from this camp focus mainly on extreme violence, drugs, sex and violent sex while on drugs. Not for the faint of heart, but once you get past the horribly offensive verses, you'll start to notice that these guys have impeccable flow and some really, really creative rhymes. If you're a backpacker and want to hear Mr. Lif bash the government, this is most likely not the release for you. However, if you like knives, blood and slasher movies, this is the Cannibal Corpse of hip-hop. (DH)

Psycho-Logical Records, www.necrohiphop.com

V/A - Punk-O-Rama 8, 2xCD

Dear lord! Two CDs of various Epitaph artists? How much punk rawk can one girl handle? I'm betting everyone already knows the deal with these comps, so I'll just list some names: Turbonegro, Hot Water Music, Refused, Division Of Laura Lee, NOFX. About 99 percent of this is previously released. (KM)

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

* V/A - Sad Songs Remind Me, The Emo Diaries, Chapter Nine, CD

Anyone who knows better has been trying to steer away from anything "emo" as of late. We're all tired of having to listen to third-wave emo dribble, played by substandard bands with no creativity. So, you can imagine my surprise when I fell in love with this compilation. But I really shouldn't have been that surprised, especially since Deep Elm has been releasing forgivingly clichéd *Emo Diaries* for many years now, most of them with songs you would revisit for mix-tape purposes. Standout tracks are lamuse's "As The Summer Pass Us By," The Local Art's "Karenihana," La Pieta's "More Of The Sky" and The National Anthems' "My Picture." The *Emo Diaries* won't be around to comfort you for much longer, as chapter 10 will be its last installment. So get 'em now before they come out with a *Monster Emo Ballads* compilation. (AA)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36959, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

V/A - Swami Sound System Vol.1: 2003 Sales Conference, CD

This is a fun compilation of unreleased tracks by bands ranging from Rocket From The Crypt to Hot Snakes to Mannequin Pussy. The best track is a rare recording from 1977 from the obscure NYC band Testors, which will simply floor fans of early punk. (AE)

Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, www.swamirecords.com

V/A - Under the Influence: Morrissey, CD

The same people who brought us the *Back To Mine* series are back with this new compilation of exquisite songs chosen by the one and only '80s heartthrob himself. None of the songs is any more recent than 1983 (refreshing!). Press repeat please—oh, yeah. (SP)

DMC Records, www.dmcworld.com

V/A - Warped Tour 2003 Tour Compilation, CD

I've been to a few Warped Tours, and this year's was probably the weakest line-up thus far. A few standout tracks from Motion City Soundtrack, NOFX and Rise Against, but I shouldn't have to wade through 52 songs on two discs to find them. (DH)

Side One Dummy Records, PO Box 2350, Los Angeles, CA 90046, www.sideonedummy.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Patrick Sayers (PS)

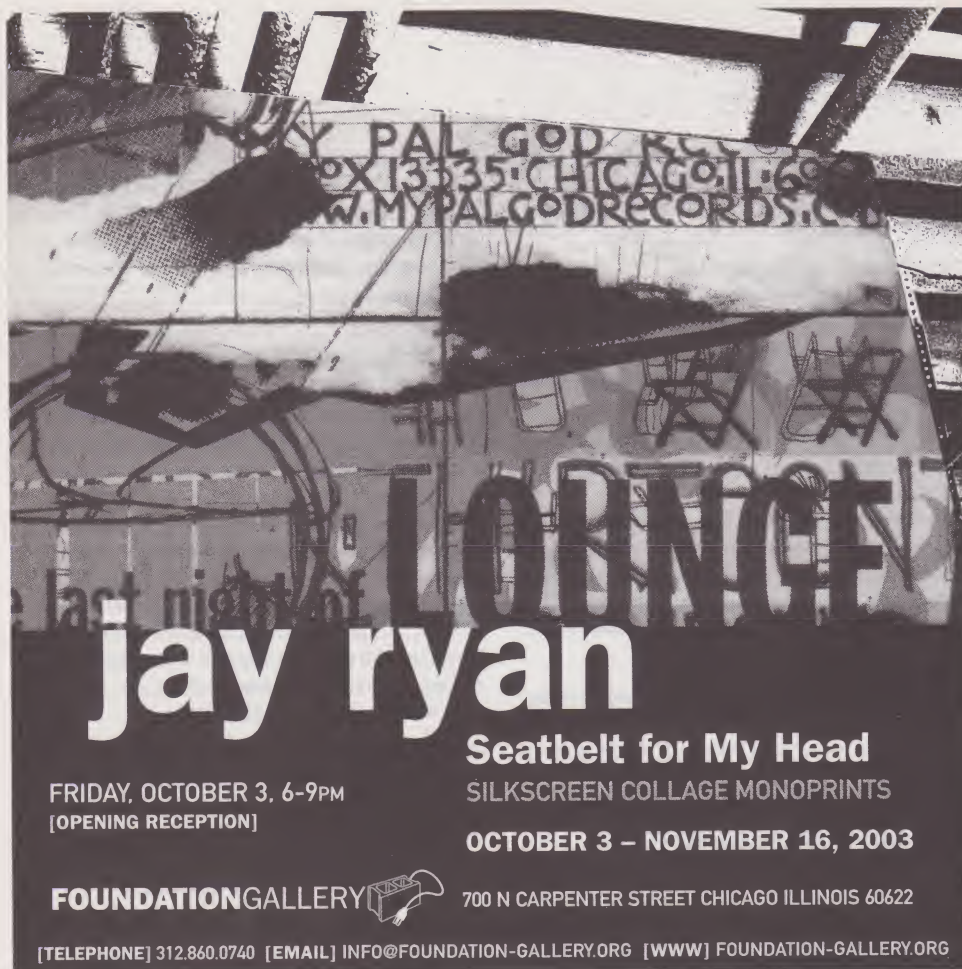
TRUMAN'S WATER, *Godspeed The Punchline*. As a teenager, I stumbled upon Truman's Water by way of mixtape. I didn't know much about them except they were weird, and that was enough for me. That summer, I kept that tape in my Walkman until it broke, and by then I'd dubbed *Godspeed The Punchline*, which eventually met the same fate. Nearly 10 years later, this CD has fallen into my hands, and the timing couldn't have been better. Every bit as playful as it is primal, this disc is a nonstop shot of dirty, quirky jerks through anhedonia spurts, like "Long End Of A Firearm." But it maintains a freer form throughout, using loops and effects to string each idea together. Often the lyrics are indecipherable, putting the vocals low in the mix only to shout back with relieving shrieks. There's nothing better than listening to this album on the move, headphones blaring, allowing its spastic blasts to play out as a cast of characters, be they the voices inside your head or the anonymous lot of commuters squished up next to you every day. Recently, I've happened upon several other Truman's Water recordings, which have also become regular additions to my portable playlist, but *Godspeed The Punchline* will forever remain my drug of choice.

Also in rotation: Kiss, *Dynasty*; Q And Not U, *Live*; Talk To Plants demo; Stiff Little Fingers, *Inflammable Material*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

NIGHT RANGER, *Midnight Madness*. When people talk about the forefathers of Bay Area punk rock, they bring up bands like the DK's, Crime or the Avengers. But one of the most overlooked bands from the early '80s was Night Ranger. Their first album, *Dawn Patrol*, made quite an impact on the punk community, but it wasn't until *Midnight Madness* that they finally grew into their sound. Many of you might be familiar with "Sister Christian," their scathing attack on organized religion from this album, but the aural assault of the other songs is really what galvanized the early SF punk scene around this band. Songs like "(You Can Still) Rock In America" helped unify the scene with the impending threat of a nuclear war and Communist takeover. The song "Rumours In The Air" attacked scene politics and backstabbing. And "Chippin' Away" turns the tables on gender roles, with the singer concerned that his girlfriend is just adding him to her sexual scoreboard. Besides just having poignant lyrics, Night Ranger featured unusually talented musicians for a punk band. There were lots of soaring guitars and solos and agile keyboard playing. Guitarist Brad Gillis was even invited to tour with Ozzy Osbourne after the death of Randy Rhoads. But after the tour, Gillis returned to his punk roots back up North. And it's a good thing that he did, because Night Ranger continued making great music through the '80s, and they're still one of my favorite bands.

Don't tell me you love me: Van Halen, Ratt, Kill Sadie, Mclusky, Dickies, Sinkhole, Pegboy, Suicidal Tendencies, NOFX, Sparks, Runnamucks.




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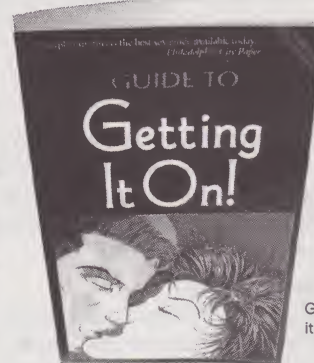
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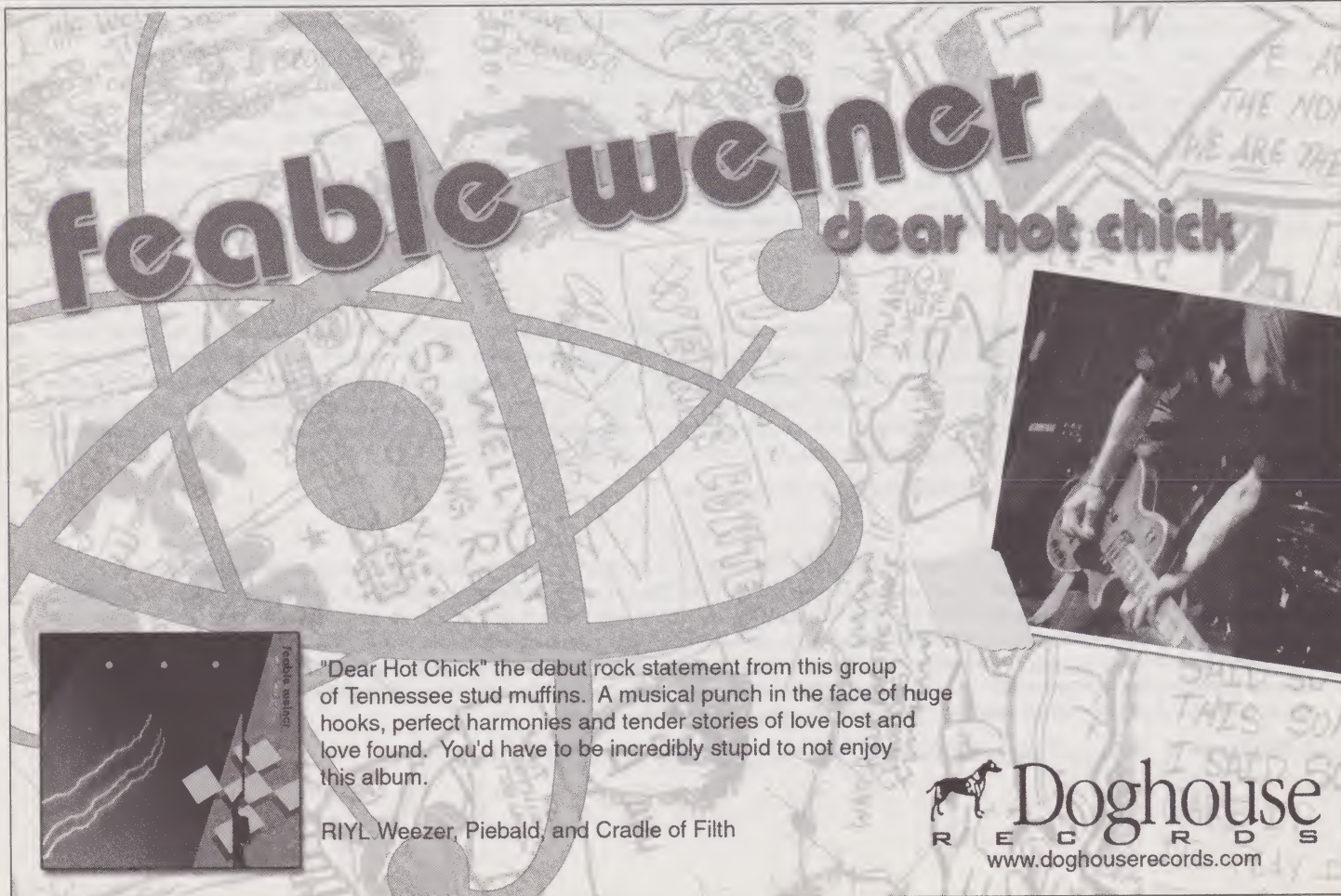
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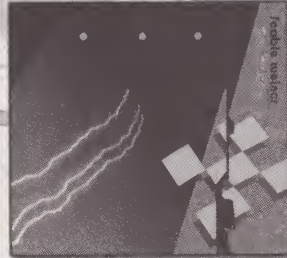
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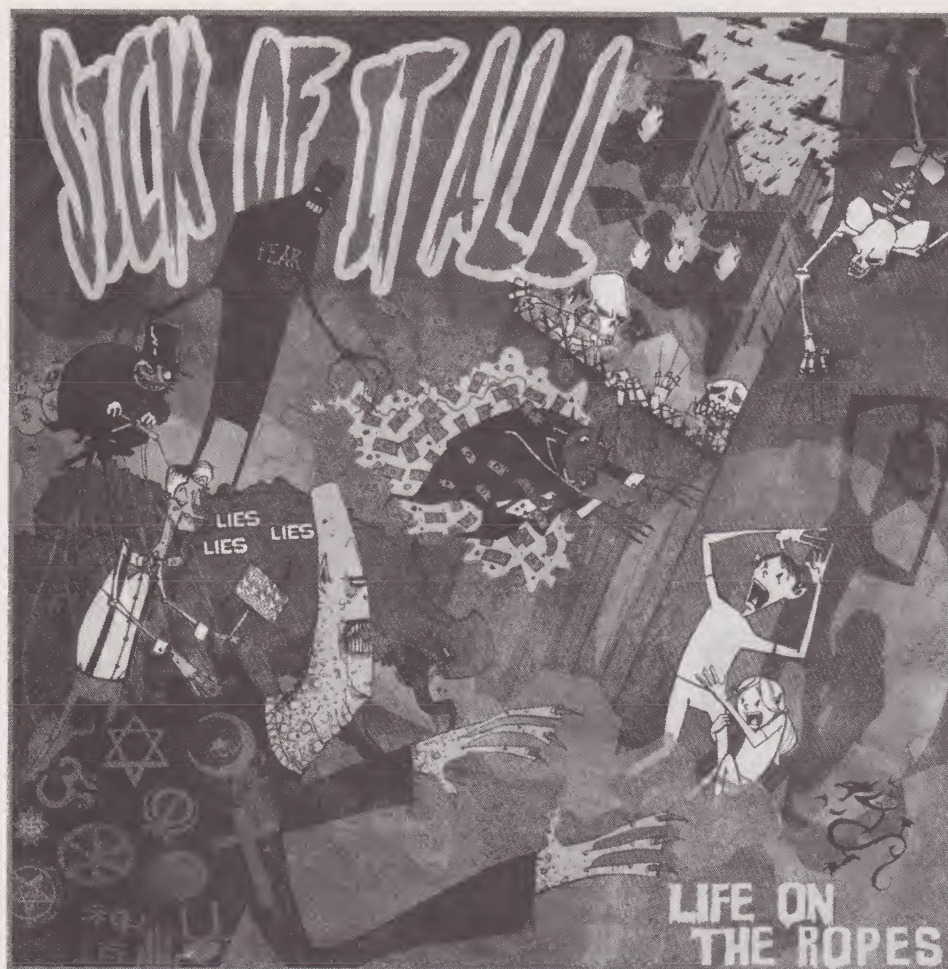
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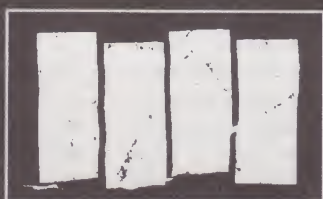
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Blue Sky Mile

BLUE SKY MILE
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Providing a common ground between melodic hardcore classics like **DAG NASTY** and current faves like **THURSDAY** and **JIMMY EAT WORLD**, **BLUE SKY MILE** carves a new path by learning from their influences, not mimicking them. **BSM** sets a new standard for melodic, emotive indie rock. **IN STORES DEC. 16th**



criteria

CRITERIA
EN GARDE
10-SONG CD

Stephen Pedersen, founding member of **CURSIVE** and **THE WHITE OCTAVE**, returned to his hometown of Omaha, Nebraska and formed **CRITERIA**. The result is a massive, catchy, inspired, anthemic, guitar-driven rock album. Includes appearances by members of **BRIGHT EYES** and **DESAPARECIDOS**.





zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Jen Dolan (JD), Erica Gallagher (EG), Dan Laidman (DAL), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS)

Adventures Of Boxlor, The

"Why here? Why now? Why at all?" plaintively asks the creative minds behind *The Adventures Of Boxlor*. Born from the minds of two self-professed misguided teenage boys in 1999, *Boxlor* started as an online feature on Superfunk and aioku.com before being picked up by the UPEI (Canada) student newspaper. After compiling the strip into a zine in January 2002, the editors sealed the copies in a cardboard box to be forgotten until a recent expedition into their archives uncovered the product of their labors. Lucky for the world, they decided to dust off the masters, revamp the layout and reprint. It's nearly impossible to top the description the creators came up with; therefore, I won't even try: *Boxlor* is a series of comic adventures about a boy with a cardboard box for a head and a short fuse. The zine is a compilation of photographs of some person actually wearing the cardboard box for a head, getting into all sorts of troublesome situations. Follow Boxlor as heads to the food court to procure a beverage, for instance. Mayhem naturally ensues. The photos are reproduced in good quality, and the sparse story text often is hilarious. My favorite Canadian zine ever. (JD)

\$2 (Canadian), c/o Mike Saturday, 1209 Pembroke St., Victoria, BC V8S 1J6, Canada, www.aioku.com/zines

Argot #1

The French have a way with sweet nothings—aesthetically sound, they could be saying, "I want to sniff your filthy, encrusted and crotch-rot burdened asshole" and still come across eloquent. Jon Maiullo's 11 poems have a similar feel—the descriptive words flow like butter, but lack any provoking content. (VC)

No price given. Jon Maiullo, 6700 South Jackson Road, Jackson, MI 49201, maiullo1@msu.edu

Art & Beauty #1

Featuring Robert Crumb's unmistakable figure drawings, *Art & Beauty* perhaps over intellectualizes these pen-and-ink pinups with art theory from Monet, Renoir and Nietzsche alongside Crumb's own written interpretations. (PS)

\$4.95, 7563 Lake City Way, N.E., Seattle, WA 98115, www.fantagraphics.com

Art And Beauty Magazine #2

Even with a bit of mainstream recognition in recent years, Robert Crumb still retains his legendary status as the ultimate in underground comics. Whether or not you believe any of the numerous allegations leveled against Crumb, his distinctive style is remarkable nonetheless. It is that style that makes a perfect complement for the voluptuous, athletic women depicted in this issue. They range from everyday women of Crumb's imagination to sports stars like Serena Williams, among others. There's a voyeuristic quality to each one, as if Crumb is standing just beyond the drawing, drooling at the scene as he draws each line. Also alongside each picture, rendered in his signature pen-and-ink hash mark-like style, are various quotes by famous artists and literary figures and Crumb's thoughts on the inspiration for each picture. Those quotes and what exactly he's trying to say through them are a bit much at times, but overall it's a fun, unique issue. (CS)

\$4.95, 7563 Lake City Way, N.E., Seattle, WA 98115, www.fantagraphics.com

Barricada: Agitational Monthly Of The Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists

This rag attempts to simplify all world politics around class lines. It definitely left me feeling agitated at the creators. An article about the U.S. Communist Party only had vampire photos. (JB)

\$2, PO Box 73 Boston, MA 02113, www.barricada.org

Bloomington Ego, The #1

There is inherent beauty in a communication system that functions by stapling messages to a kiosk on your college town's main drag. However, it makes for pain in the neck fact-checking for *Punk Planet* reviewers. Issue #1 is long on snooze, extremely short on engaging graphic content. (JD)

Free, thebloomingtonego@yahoo.com

Bloomington Ego, The, #2

Actually, this zine needs more ego. I like the interviews with nontraditional subjects, like a stand-up comic and an up-and-coming writer. But it's an indistinct hodgepodge that lacks cohesion and needs a stronger voice. (DAL)

Free, thebloomingtonego@yahoo.com

Chickenhed Zine And Roll #5

Zinester Josh makes a telling offhand remark in the midst of a damned witty story about yarfing at a party back in 1994. He describes himself at the time as a teenage recluse who sat at home "making terrible zines." I point that out because, a decade later, he makes wonderful zines, and it's a testament to the power and potential of zines as a craft and a skill to be honed. Like any other artform, you really can grow by doing it over time, and this is the perfect example. I can't recommend this enough. It's brilliantly written, and Josh's grasp of the form is so shrewd it only could have come with years of experience. The way he cuts into his stories with flashbacks and the way he uses his handwriting and his cut & paste for narrative effect is genius. He tells stories from his past and paints totally vivid characters and shows you his dilemmas and his classic-punk obsessions about place and friendship and expression and all that other good stuff. One of the best zines I've read in a long time. (DAL)

\$2 or \$1 & 3 stamps, PO Box 330, Richmond, VA 23218

Chronic Masterbater, The

This short comic plays on the old myth that little boys who touch themselves go to hell. Crude, both in content and drawing, *The Chronic Masterbater* (their misspelling, not mine) is fun, unadulterated humor. (PS)

Free, PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130

Crash

The creators of *Crash* might think it has a radical agenda, but I found a lot of it to be quite moderate. Would a feminist identify a woman as a "floozy" or a "skank"? To top it off, the text is plain, small and hard to read. (JB)

\$1.50, PO Box 20455 Newark, NJ 07101, crashzine@hotmail.com

Comet, Vol. 4, #1

Interesting magazine from California that features interviews with multi-talented instrumentalist Beth Custer, Exene Cervenka, author Marvin K. White, plus some excellent fiction and poetry. Also included is a unique idea called "Hold Up: An envelope art show" that features photocopied works by four artists housed inside a simple white envelope. (CS)

\$5, 711 Hilldale Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94708, www.cometmagazine.com



Committed To The Custody Of The Attorney General

In prison for dealing drugs, Seth Ferranti passes time by writing poetry. Reflective of his experiences, the poems are about confinement, injustice, humiliation and mandatory sentencing. His work is most affecting when it focuses on the inhumanity of the system ("Prison Guard") rather than the unfairness of his drug sentence. (JD)

No price listed. Seth Ferranti, 18205-083 Box 420 B-left, FJ Fariton, NJ 08640, www.prisonlife.com

Die, The, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 2003

More finger-pointing rants than intellectual digestion of information. I've read Chokehold lyrics that were more thoughtful. I agree with his stance, but his narrowly condescending commentary would only disillusion fence riders, and conservatives would have a field day dissecting this idealism. (VC)

Donations. PO Box 764, College Park, MD 20740, www.redroachpress.tripod.com

Do The Dog #29

This is the newsiest zine I have ever since. It's a ska mag from England that's filled with tons of short news bits about ska bands from around the world. Indispensable for ska fans. (DAL)

26a Craven Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5NE, UK

East Village Inky #19

Ayun is an example of what we may become when we're all grown up and had kids. She's got two kids, and *EVI* documents her life as a mother who prefers to take her kids to an antiwar protest rather than letting idly rot in front of the television. It's quaint, silly and may come in handy somewhere down the line... (AA)

S2, PO Box 22754, Brooklyn, NY 11202, www.ayunhalliday.com

Eaves Of Ass #2

This one gets points for putting a creative spin on the review ritual: the editor and two of his buddies get drunk and listen to records together and fight and transcribe it. Plus a funny erotic letter he found in the street and assorted rants and surreal prose. (DAL)

\$1.50 or trade, Craven Rock, PO Box 406784, Louisville, KY 40204

Green Anarchy #13

There's something really thrilling about this paper, even if the violent anti-civilization politics aren't your thing. Most of it is pretty dense and dire, but there's plenty to read, and a new column trash-talking lefties in the voice of the Muppets balcony guys injects some refreshing levity. (DAL)

No price given, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, www.greenanarchy.org

Guts

Commendable effort, but predictably boring. Interesting artwork, but messy composition and bad copies. Esoteric all around, but you don't care to understand anyway. Poetry, short stories—even one that begins "I had a dream one time..." Stories about dreams are never as interesting as the dreamer had intended. Double-yawn. (AA)

No price given. Nathan Diminarian, 5833 SW Idaho St., Portland, OH 97221

Hobart #2

Hobart is a literary journal that puts Christ, serial killers and the Grim Reaper (to name a few) on parade for its brand of absurd humor. These well-traveled roads may not be paved in originality, but *Hobart* never takes itself too seriously, a welcome change for the lit zine. (PS) \$8, Aaron Burch, 9251 Densmore Ave N., Seattle WA 98103, www.hobartpulp.com

I'm Johnny And I Don't Give a Fuck #5

Punk houses are never kind. Placing anarchistic ideals and human chaos into an "order" draws dysfunctional drama, and Andy describes

nine excruciating years of transient roommates, house shows and evil landlords. The first half is a tedious read of meaningless introductions, but ends with a crushing—but irrelevant—climax. (VC)

\$4, PO Box 21533, 1850 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, BC V5N 5T5, Canada

Infiltration #20

The zine about infiltrating hidden and forbidden places focuses on the underground tunnels beneath Minneapolis and St. Paul. It's a fascinating subject and a really cool topic for a zine, but *Infiltration* is a little inaccessible itself. If the writing were more colorful, perhaps it would be more readable. (DAL)

\$2, PO Box 13, Station E, Toronto, ON, M6H 4E1, www.infiltration.org

Interstitial

A sloppy, loosely edited cut-and-paste effort with articles on sodomy laws, mix tapes, bar codes and music/movie coverage. I wasn't impressed, but at least compelled enough to keep reading. (JB)

No price, no address given. www.newfutur.com

It's All Gravy #3

Short & spunky snippets from young LA punks (who seem to range in age from 14 to 21) about everything from riding the bus to watching cartoons to going to see the Black Flag reunion and ska bands. There are days I wish you could bottle this kind of energy. (DAL)

\$1, Nikolai Garcia, c/o Libros Revolution, 312 W. Eighth St., Los Angeles, CA 90001

Jupiter's Sorrows #1

Let me be honest. I appreciate *Jupiter's Sorrow* for its stylistic use of images. Most zines I see these days don't utilize photos and graphics effectively, if at all. However, the insipid new-age stream-of-consciousness writing made me cringe uncontrollably with every single word I had to read. (JD)

No price listed. c/o The Lab, 2613 Conger Ave. NW, Olympia, WA 98502

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (N) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

**Kelp #10**

After a four-year hiatus, Kelp's editrix returns to put the 10th and final issue of *Kelp* to bed. It's a shame, really, as it's quite an enjoyable read. Features a good interview with Eric Nakamura from *Giant Robot* and Midwest Haiku. Best of luck to Mary in her future endeavors. (JD)
\$6 (comes with a Lisboa/Automat split 7"), 74 Silver St., Waterville, ME 04901

► Killing Cupid #1

You have to admire the ambition of a project like this, a six-issue comic book series, each one including its own original 7" record. The comic documents the adventures of Cupid and a guy named Ronald. It's full of references to Greek mythology, but it's also enjoyable low-brow, with Ronald being kind of a belligerent, drunken carouser who gets fed up with his pal Cupid (whom he describes as "a cherubic sonuvabitch in a freakin' diaper"). The record this time around contains two songs by Pistol At Dusk. The songs have a harsh, hard-rock edge that seems like good background music for the comic's opening scene in the bar. Future issues will have split 7-inches by different bands. (DAL)

Alan Dubinsky, 821 SE 29th Ave #1, Portland, OR 97214, www.killingcupid.net

Layers Magazine #3

This large, ambitious zine contains commentary on 9/11, an interview with the Distillers, work by artist Michael Naples, Ron Wheeler's photos of the Middle East and lots of music reviews. There's also an excellent interview with ex-con Victor Scott that talks about life in prison and the implications of the system. (CS)

\$4.99, 15140 Evergreen Dr., Apt. 3D, Orland Park, IL 60642, six66punk@aol.com

► Layers Magazine #4

Perhaps doubling as *The Zinemaker's Guide To Contradiction*, *Layers* bounces back and forth between its sole contributor's need for a positive outlet while shitting on everyone in his path. It's not uncommon to sift through uplifting interviews with Snapcase, MXPX and Boysetsfire only to stumble across album reviews drenched in bile that say little about the albums themselves. More puzzling is the continuous denouncement of "art fags," as *Layers'* spiral-bound, sparse layout is much more artful and ambitious than most zines that feature this writing style. At almost 100 pages, it might do the editor some good to wear fewer hats, as his reviews, prose, poetry and interviews all suffer slightly from self-induced overload. (PS)

\$5, c/o Brian Bush, 15140 Evergreen Drive, Orland Park, IL 60462

Lollipop #61

I'm wary of glossy "zines" with tons of adoring 500-word "articles" on bands intermingled with badly designed ads. This one was no exception. But fear not, *Lollipop* is also an exception to the exception. Why? For its scathing review of Tim Armstrong's pet project, The Transplants, and 4Y-Records comic strip. (AA)

\$4.95, PO Box 441493, Boston, MA 02144, www.lollipop.com

Lost Cause Vol. 1, Issue #6

"Minnesota's Music Journal"—they do little to hide their naiveté as hip indie kids and bite off more than they can chew. The writing is excellent, though; so it's only a matter of time and experience until this zine recognizes its full potential and becomes a force to contend with. (VC)

Free, PO Box 13450, Minneapolis, MN 55414, www.lostcausemag.com

Lost Cause Vol. 1, Issue #7

Coverage of rock and hip hop from the Twin Cities. I don't have a newfound interest after reading this, but it would be a great resource for someone new to the area. (JB)

Free, PO Box 13450, Minneapolis, MN 55414, www.lostcausemag.com

Lost Cause, Vol.1 Issue #8

Minneapolis newsprint scene zine. Stories on Bill Patten, Sonic Demons, Song of Zarathustra, Flamin' Oh's and a little something on composers in Minnesota. Well constructed, and it's free. So, you really can't complain because you didn't spend a dime on it. (AA)

Free, PO Box 13450, Minneapolis, MN 55414, lostcausemag@yahoo.com

Lost Cause, Vol. 1, Issue #9

This is an excellent local music newspaper out of Minneapolis. It's obvious that it comes from people who care about and are deeply involved in the scene there. Great layouts and content. Included are interviews with The Bleeding Hickeys, Ol' Yeller and advice on how to get booked in the city. (CS)

Free, PO Box 13450, Minneapolis, MN 55414, www.lostcausemag.com

Lost Cause Vol. 1, Issue #10

Rarely have I seen a local music journal as devoted as *Lost Cause*. Bringing the Twin Cities' talent to the forefront, this issue features an interview with Rhymesayers MC Brother Ali, a fun-filled tour diary with Malachi Constant and an editorial on Clear Channel in the Twin Cities. (PS)

Free, PO Box 13450, Minneapolis, MN 55414, www.lostcausemag.com

► Metal Rules! #16

If Beavis & Butt-head did a magazine about metal, would you read it? Fuck yeah, you would! Why? Not because of any ground-breaking rock journalism, but because they would ingrain the reporting with their Maiden-obsessed personalities, capturing their readers with charm and (lack of) wit. *Metal Rules!* accomplishes that, though Jeff has much more intelligence than our monosyllabic buddies. Covering equal parts mainstream metal acts, more obscure fare and film/television actors, each feature is loaded with snarky commentary that mixes endearing fanboy astonishment and hardened, sarcastic cynicism. Self-aware of the impending corniness of some subjects, yet too naive to be pretentiously self-important, Jeff creates a balance of honest and thoughtful coverage—something most music magazines painfully lack. Definitely the most down-to-earth and personable metal magazine around. The fifth anniversary issue includes entertaining interviews with such musical acts as Jason Newsted and Voivod, Steve Vai, Golem and Hammersfall. Also, interviews with actors Jason Mewes (*Jay And Silent Bob*), Jeremy Licht (*The Hogan Family*), Mark Metcalf (*Seinfeld*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the father in *Twisted Sister* videos) and Steve Guttenberg (*Police Academy*, *Short Circuit*). (VC)

\$5, 2116 Sandra Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043, www.metalrulesmagazine.com

Mothership Is Gone, The

Thomas recounts a summer filled with funerals, cross-country travels with his friends' bands and the claustrophobic but creative process of recording his own music. It's slightly esoteric in that it sort of has that "you had to be there" feeling, but it still makes for an interesting project. (CS)

No price given, Thomas Nosewicz, 700 Nashville Ave., New Orleans, LA 70115, tnoz@ucink4.berkeley.edu

Multi-Kid #3

Eclectic zine produced by a few people in different parts of the country. It includes a cool travelogue about a Midwestern punk road trip (with mom) to Vedic City, Iowa; an account of visiting a friend in jail; a lengthy cartoon about a brawl outside a show and more. (DAL)

\$2, Echo, PO Box 414, Berkeley, CA 94701

My Bad Poetry 5

Jeff Hall beat us to the punchline by naming with his zine name. Yup, good going there, Jeff. But, to be honest, not all of it was bad per se. There was one poem I genuinely enjoyed: "The Apple Poem"—it's one big analogy. I love analogies. (AA)

\$1, trade, 3 stamps, Jeff Hall/MBP, 1197 Commonwealth Ave., #3, Allston, MA 02134, jeffhall3@yahoo.com

Negrita #3

This personal zine covers three topics: race and identity, hitchhiking stories and tedious rants about her painfully drawn-out breakup. The accounts of lackluster events were mundane, and the break-up sections were annoying, but if Glo can focus on analysis rather than description of her anger and insight, this could go places. (VC)

No price given, c/o Overground Distro, PO Box 1661, Pensacola, FL 32591

Nero Fiddled While Rome Burned

A full-size zine chock full of smart, acerbic commentary on 9/11 and the Bush administration. The best part is a piece titled, "Sources Say..." that mixes true and false stories of the administration in the news. Jacob's I-know-more-than-you-do attitude is a bit much at times but it's an otherwise engaging read. (CS)

3 stamps or trade, Jacob David, PO Box 3050, Eureka, CA 95502

Nerve, The #6

Horror-movie reviews, skateboarding coverage and positively skittish columns make this Vancouver-based alternative newspaper a blast to read. Featured interviews include Lagwagon, Dropkick Murphys and original Iron Maiden singer, Paul Di'Anno. (PS)

508-825 Granville St., Vancouver, BC V6Z 1K9, Canada, www.thenervemagazine.com

Nerve, The #27

Why, the nerve of *The Nerve* to hop on the punk-porn bandwagon. Haven't Suicide Girls been covered to death *ye?* This is the sex issue, and if you're into offensive, misogynistic, poorly written, not at all funny columns, articles and interviews, this zine is for you. (JD)

No price given, 508-825 Granville St., Vancouver, BC V6Z 1K9, Canada, www.thenervemagazine.com

Never 1984 #1

Teen activists speak out against corporate evils without the dogmatic tone that often plagues this type of zine. Its no-frills photocopy layout bleeds with informative and idealistic content that offers a good start for other students getting involved. Also includes interviews with Blowback and *Trash Faction* zine. (PS)

\$1, 4401 Fair Oaks Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Northeast Punk Flyers

A welcome addition to the recent influx of punk-artwork anthologies. Collage artist extraordinaire Winston Smith and *Suburban Voice's* Al Quint both deliver inspiring forewords that are surely eclipsed by the flyers themselves. With concentration on '80s punk, *NEPF* features both the legends and more obscure acts. (PS)

\$3, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130

Offbeat, The #2

Post-high school angst to the 10th power. Cut and paste galore with rants on the obvious checklist topics: racism, homophobia and feminism. And some bad poetry just to round everything out. No new ground. Just new kids discovering that they can write about it and make a buncha copies. (AA)

Free, offbeat679@yahoo.com

Off My Jammy / Slingshot

Off My Jammy #15

It's the "Gently Used" issue of *Off My Jammy*, where Lisa highlights people and organizations reusing and recycling (whether it be household items, women's clothes or hits from the '80s). Features Dorothy Hui from TV's *Mole 2* and short interviews with American Hi-Fi and Tegan & Sara. Pretty good effort. (JD)

\$1.50, PO Box 440422, Somerville, MA 02144, www.sinkcharmer.com/omj

Paul The Punker #10

Don't let the sucky art fool you: This issue is actually worth reading. It tells the tale of Paul's gay, skinhead friend and the sidesplitting, gut-busting predicament that is a biting commentary on how racist gay dudes have no sense of irony. Like whoa. (AA)

\$1, F.N.S. Publishing, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.com

Philadelphia Independent Vol. 1, Issue 7

Last time around, I praised this newsletter's spot-on coverage and superior design sensibility—and I'll do it again. Enormous in format (a 22-inch by 17-inch trim size or "Too Big to Read on the Subway"), this free special edition covers protesting the War in Iraq. With appropriate contempt, the paper offers intelligent and thoughtful analysis not on the war, but on the alienation of Americans under Bush Jr.'s administration. By reporting on local protests, discussing the manipulated definitions of media buzzwords and an intensive historical study on Iraqi civilization, the reporting accomplishes where most political zines fail—by providing informative intellectualism without sounding like an academic. *PI*'s writers are frank and humorous, which overshadows their attacks with an effective humanistic quality. With a stronger focus, the clutter is reduced for a cleaner design—my only complaint last time around, which makes this issue near perfect. I can't recommend this more highly. (VC)

\$0C in Philly, \$1 elsewhere. 307 Market St., Second Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2115

Philadelphia Independent, The, Vol. 1, Issue 8

I was lucky enough to meet the founders of *The Philadelphia Independent* at this year's Allied Media Conference in Bowling Green, Ohio. I was tickled to learn that they were holding court in the exhibit hall—it's rare that I get to meet the brains behind a publication I admire as much as I do theirs. In case you haven't been lucky enough to read *PI* yet, let me fill you in. It's a stunningly designed monthly-ish newspaper (yes, newspaper) devoted to covering events and people in Philly (and beyond). In an era where major U.S. cities have one daily local newspaper if they're lucky, *The Philadelphia Independent* unabashedly celebrates and supports the events and happenings that have been ignored by traditional media outlets. This issue features articles in scope from politics to the summer stench of flowering pear trees. I love that they devote whole pages to photographs or art reproductions. You know by the care that's taken in the layout, the print quality, the witty front-page headlines and the overall caliber of writing that this is a labor of love. If only every city could be so lucky.... (JD)

\$0C in Philly, \$1 elsewhere. 307 Market St., Second Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2115

Picaresque #4

A collection of short stories from a boy's life that often segue one into another just as they get interesting. Contains a piece about feeling strange sending his zine to *Punk Planet*, which he should continue to do. The best issue yet. (JB)

\$1(?). Brendan Rocks, C-3 Sharpley Ave., Stawell, Victoria 3380 Australia, brendanrocks@hotmail.com

Pigeonhold

A skateboarding mag containing ads, photos, a retrospective on Bad Religion, interviews with Shiner and Mike Watt, and some record reviews. More meat and potatoes substance, please! (JB)

Free. 4280 Catalpa Dr. Independence, KY 41051

Politburo Punk #2

The "sex" issue from this academic political zine. Whoever thought someone could make an issue about sex so dry, boring, and, well, unsexy? The articles are well-researched and interesting, but any attempt to spice it up involves an ad for SuicideGirls.com and naked political protesting. (VC)

\$5. James C. Wolf, 1542 Adams Rd., Mt. Healthy, OH 45231, jnewyouth@aol.com

Poor and Forgotten #11

Great cover, but much of the inside effort fails to deliver, offering only short anecdotes and poems. The largest bit of substance is an interview with Anthony Rayson (Anarchist Black Cross). Researched, political articles would take this zine leaps and bounds in the direction it seems to want to go. (JB)

\$1. FNS Publishing PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.com

Poor And Forgotten #12

Cut-and-paste-style zine with poetry, short stories, a punk-rock word search, an interview with Rusty Haight of *Broken Glass Barbed Wire Street Fight* zine, plus some music reviews. It's a good start but left me wanting to know a bit more. (CS)

\$1. c/o FNS Publishing, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.com

Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus, The #5

Don't let the cover fool you. The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus (PFE) is not about gangsta life, although it uses a still from Dr. Dre's evocative video "Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang." PFE, instead is three chapters of a serialized novel about the life and times of a college garage-rock band. (EG)

\$3, PO Box 770332, Lakewood, OH 44107

Problem Child #1

A literary zine full of short fiction that promises "stories that were too sexy and edgy for mainstream markets, it seemed, but without enough actual genital action to make the erotica markets happy." Some good, bold fiction, but the price tag is hefty. (DAL)

\$6, PO Box 460310, San Francisco, CA 94146-0310

Punctuation Training

Angela recounts the scary experience of her first period at age 14. She tells her story in the third person, which makes her encounter with a tampon-gone-wrong seem even more harrowing. This was a quick, fun read, and I hope she does more issues that explore similar themes. (CS)

\$1 and a stamp. Angela McArthur, 630 SE Yamhill #205, Portland, OR 97214

Puppet Terror #1

Wow, this is quite possibly one of the weirdest and scariest things I've ever seen. There are crazy stories of puppet attacks, clown encounters of the worst kind, a history of puppets from around the world and a list of humans who inspire puppet terror among other terrific delights. (CS)

\$4. c/o Gehman, POB 29432, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.puppetterror.com

Rancid-News #2

I am duly impressed by *Rancid-News*. The editorial team members are either in high school or in university, for goodness' sake, yet they publish something really well put together. I liked the balance of male and female voices in their columns section, and their interviews were not too terribly bad. (JD)

\$4/£4, PO Box 382, 456-458 The Strand, London, WC2R 0DZ, UK, www.rancid-news.co.uk

Raw #5

Cut and paste is an art form too, folks, and a little attention to layout won't hurt. Mad Cow Disease, a guide to Boston watering holes and an interview with The Epoxies are among this skimpy zine's (ahem) finer points. Certainly better suited for a half-page format. (PS)

No price given. Rawrwar@hotmail.com

Rock Out!

It all began innocently enough. Girl goes to Chicago Women's Health Center. Girl encounters a comfortable waiting room with good reading material. Girl gets on the exam table and is asked if she would like to insert the speculum herself. Thus began the DIY collaboration to fundraise for said health center, which then leads to a wide-reaching show-booking co-opt of sorts. *Rock Out!* is a priceless resource for anyone who has wanted to book shows in their rinky-dink town, but had no inclination of where to start. It's basic and covers all the mundane questions that you might have considered too stupid to ask. This zine is also an awesome resource because it encourages booking women-friendly spaces with girls on stage, rather than being relegated to the back of the room. And any zine with Beverly Cleary's Ramona Quimby shouting on the cover is always welcome in my mailbox. (AA)

\$2. PO Box 5027, Chicago, IL 60680-5027, chicapalta@hotmail.com

Run Aground #2

A true outlet. Fiction, interviews (with our very own Dan Sinker and Al Quint from *Suburban Voice*), traveling diaries and record reviews dominate this decently done zine, but the real winner is the frustrated narrative by a punk in the military. (VC)

\$2. Dave Varno, 10 Pearson Rd., Preston Hollow, NY 12469

Scenery #14

Three Gainesville punx examine their sociological existence in the student ghetto of a transient college town. By focusing on the "punk house show," they document the importance of the show as a defining mile marker in the broader picture. Incredibly written and illustrated in a beautiful comic-book format, the story of a local band called Radon unfolds. It's not linear and doesn't really have a plot, but the zine celebrates and documents Gainesville in the '90s: a hotbed of activity that put the town on the map. It views the house show as a statement to create identity within the environment, but also shows how these identities are short-lived, as the punk-rock ghettos pave the way for further gentrification. As the punks graduate or move to more trendy cities, very little is left to pick up the slack, leaving Gainesville's scene wounded. The art itself seems to be based off of pictures from the era: monochrome drawings of "kids" hanging out, bands performing and Gainesville architecture. It's almost a scrapbook of sorts. Excellent in line weight and contrast, the zine looks as good as it reads. Five years were spent on this zine, and they were well worth it. (VC)

\$2. Mike Taylor, PO Box 28226, Providence, RI 02908

Skin Deep #1 (Revised)

Two-words: skinhead poetry. Oh my fucking christ. If this zine isn't a joke, then it just reaffirms the belief that "skins" are mouth-breathing troglodytes and terrible spellers. It's really tough to be offended by racist, homophobic (yet still slightly homoerotic) "poems" when all you're thinking is, "Damn, public schools are failing our children." (AA)

\$1, postage or trade. PO Box 13093, Mpls, MN 55414

Slam #9

This promises to be the worst review I have written for *PP* since I wrote about a zine that was in Italian. This glossy Austrian music mag is in German. It's got tons of reviews and interviews, including chats with big-name bands like Anthrax, AFI, Get Up Kids and Rocket From The Crypt. (DAL)

www.slam-zine.com

Slingshot #78

What's black and white and red all over? Why, *Slingshot*, the radical quarterly out of—where else?—Berkeley, Calif. The covers and centerfold of this 15-page tabloid-style zine are splashed with red to emit a sense of anxiety and uneasiness. Topics range from organizing against



the upcoming World Trade Organization summit in Cancun to a recap of worldwide war resistance. A Spanish-language page is a new feature this ish. *Slingshot's* use of newsprint appears to be a "fuck you" to corporate print media. It could learn a thing or two from the big boys, however, like spell check and using a few authoritative sources instead of hearsay. (EG)

\$1. 3124 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705, <http://slingshot.tao.ca/index.php>

Slouch #4

Smart and well-written mish-mash zine. *Slouch* keeps you interested throughout its 26 pages. From a convincing anti-Diesel jeans essay to a personal exploration of alternative relationships, this zine has no coherent theme. But that doesn't take away from its quality. It's like having a conversation with a friend where you talk about anything that pops into your mind, and you're both cracking each other up. There's also a heavy dose of articulate antiwar rhetoric, including a depressingly wonderful cartoon by a girl named Penny. An interview with Silkworm is also included, along with a Gulf War crossword puzzle for all you socio-political geeks! (AA)

\$2.50. 1700 Golden Gate Ave. #24, San Francisco, CA 94115, www.momireadslouch.net

Slug And Lettuce #75

The spring edition of this long-running Richmond DIY paper is understandably full of writing about the Iraq war. All the contributors are antiwar lefties, but they still come from a variety of perspectives. I like the column on agriculture and war that starts, "The day after they began dropping this latest round of bombs on Iraq, I was sitting in a greenhouse on a farm two hours north of New York City, planting flats of broccoli seeds." The same piece ends with an internal dialogue with the writer's self-righteous teenage vegan self. Clever. Others look at motherhood and war, and a radical parenting column has an appreciation of Mr. Rogers. I agree, the man was both a national treasure and a radical. Anyway, there's plenty more interesting writing, plus tons of zine and music reviews, useful independent ads, striking cover art, all on delicious newsprint for us print junkies. Like a fantastic mini-*PP* or *MRR* for only 60 cents' worth of stamps, but donations are appreciated. Go forth and donate! (DAL)

60 cents' postage (donation recommended), PO Box 26632, Richmond, VA 23261-6632

Square Triangles #1

"The zine for gay nerds," it mocks a British gay magazine's unadventurous list of things to do before you turn 30. Suggestions: join a cult, find a giant squid, put out your own zine, etc. Nice mix of material, and I like the narration by the stick figure man. (DAL)

No price given. 8 Page St., Toronto, Ontario M6G-1J2, Canada, bynecxchee@yahoo.com

Square Triangles #2

Disjointed trivia presented as a choose your own adventure. Billed as a zine "for gay nerds" its easy to see the appeal to the latter, but with exception to one article, there's little to suggest any content geared towards homosexuals. (PS)

No price given. 8 Page St., Toronto, Ontario M6G-1J2, Canada, bynecxchee@yahoo.com

Starting From Seed

DIY dissertation on the DIY scene in the Pacific Northwest. Interviews with Microcosm Publishing, Peripheral Produce, The Museum of Unfine Art, My House and more. Also includes a short "Guide to Organizing Your Own DIY Project." Isn't it interesting that the DIY scene needs so many guides and how-tos? (AA)

\$4. 70 Victoria Blvd., Kenmore, NY 14217

Strait 6

Stories from a thirtysomething about working at a shelter with Mexican and South American (what the U.S. government deems to be) illegal immigrants in Texas, taking medications for clinical depression (and talking about it), the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe, gender statistics about mental health and speculation as to their meaning. They're all held together with references to religion and bondage gear. I learned a lot from this perspective, and while the zine is relatively short, it offers a lot in terms of material to ponder. It doesn't discuss things at length as much as it inseminates an idea or starting point. It made me feel good sitting on the porch at 8 a.m. and kicking my brain into overdrive. (JB)

\$1. Lane Van Ham, 1141 E Adams, #6 Tucson, AZ 85719

Sugar Needle #23

Some zines review other zines. Some review household drugs, scams and other "punk" things. Most review records. *Sugar Needle* reviews foreign candy. Witty and charming, it's more interesting than reading some kid nerd out about Japanese hardcore records. Be a winner, drop those Snickers, and read up on German peanut chews. (VC)

\$1, plus stamp or weird candy. PO Box 300152, Minneapolis, MN 55403

'Sup #11

'*Sup* carries a fleeting tone focusing on "now" bands that levitate between larger indie fare to "the next big thing." Insincere in its quest for "cool," the shallow, ass-kissing (but informative) interviews generate more hype than stimulating entertainment. According to *The Hipster Handbook*, this zine is very "deck." (VC)

Free. The Zoo York Institute, 1384 Broadway, NY, NY 10018, www.supmag.com

Synthetic Universe #3

Unrequited love, prosthetic limbs, "sustenance crackers." What's going on here? A subtle, character-driven comic book in the Dan Clowes style, but set in a surreal 2020. Plus plenty of shorter stories, all creative and engrossing. Very well drawn and well produced, too. (DAL)

\$3.95. Hardcut Publishing, PO Box 291700, Los Angeles, CA 90029

Tales Of A Traveling Panty Salesman

This is the story of a boy going on tour with a rambunctious rock band and exploring the US of A for the first time. The stories are worth reading, and he has a real penchant for this kind of storytelling; his descriptions give an accurate portrayal of things in just a few words. The writing is setup chronologically along the tour and talks about the notable elements of each state and city they visited. The title refers to the fact that band sold panties as merchandise and that it was his job to sell them, though the zine doesn't talk about specific incidents too much at length. This was so good that I didn't want to put it down and read my other titles for review. (JB)

\$2. vinylaprintprint. 135 Wapwallopen Road Nescopeck, PA 18635, www.vinylagogo.com

Teenage Death Songs #15

This pays respects to Sera, a woman who committed suicide earlier this year and was friend to many in the zine community. It reads like a long eulogy, extolling tales of friendship and loss. (JB)

\$2. Tennessee Jones, 1090 Greene Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11221, tennessee@softskull.com

Tommy Gun: Fierce Dyke Adventures #14

Tommy Gun comics feature kind-of-cute stories about chyx who eschew dicks in favor of bikes and politics (of the personal and political variety)—not too shabby for a 10-minute read. (JD)

\$1. dwytt@hotmail.com

Two Tone Cat

Letting its need to be offensive take precedent over plot, *Two Tone Cat* features two cartoons filled with the violent and grotesque. Jamie Craw's morbid drawings are certainly worth checking out, so I can only hope the writing catches up. (PS)

\$2.95, 58 Polo Road, Great Neck, NY 11023

UHPHRA #1

The title says it all: *UHPHRA*—the *United Hardcore Punk And Hip Hop Radical Alliance*—links the genres in a cut-and-paste format. Interviewees (What Happens Next?, Crucial Unit and Nomar Slevik) namedrop hip hop, hardcore and punk bands and chat about current projects. A "Politics" section outlines police-state repression. (EG)

\$1, 1160 Timbercrest, Youngstown, OH 44505, www.geocities.com/unitedhiphiphardcorealliance/

Underground Zine #13

UGZ is a nice looking zine filled with photography, capturing bands at their most energetic as well as photo journals documenting French street punks and skateboarders alike. Tour diaries, interviews with Born/Dead, a history of the zine's inception, and a heap of reviews interspersed amongst common punk bickering and nostalgia. (PS)

No price given. PMB 419, 1442A Walnut Street, Berkeley, CA 94709, www.wethepunx.com

Untitled No.2

Interesting, non-linear comic filled with wacky animals, angry robots, stick figures and other fascinating black-and-white depictions. I think that, if there are such things as "cartoon nightmares," then this might be one episode of a very crazy dream. (CS)

\$2. Maximus T. Kim, P08 91142, City of Industry, CA 9175-1142, maximus@ecologyfund.net

Zod #5

Could *Zod* get any sweeter? It's very doubtful. Issue #5 finds artist Jacob Steingroot reimagining Shakespeare's *Romeo And Juliet* with kitties, puppies, penguins, pigs and strange-looking owls. Steingroot relies on his drawings to convey the story, throwing over dialog in favor of colorful and quirky story panels. Highly recommended. (JD)

\$2, www.zodmagazine.com

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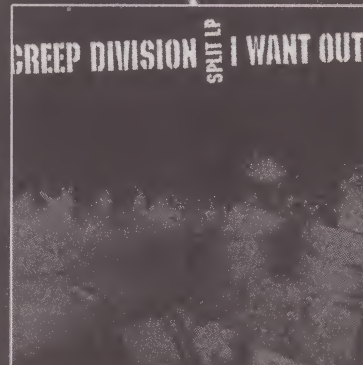
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The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture

Bakari Kitwana
Basic Civitas Books

One thing that has given me hope in a very grim year is the flourishing of youth activism. While bombardiers demolish schools abroad and choke their funding here, the movement continues to build. One sign of this is a growing body of literature that seeks to explain youth concerns, and the distinct political forms they're taking, to people who won't believe the movement has arrived until "We Shall Overcome" rings the planet, the way Coca-Cola's "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing" ad once did.

There's a growing body of youth literature that seeks to address the generation gap in political dissent on its terms. For Bakari Kitwana, "the divide between the hip-hop generation and that of our parents (the civil rights/Black power generation) is as vast as the one that separated white America in the 1960s, as radical white youth culture broke from the mainstream and swept across the country." Kitwana examines the paradox of late 20th Century Black America, in which "the monumental achievement of our parents' generation" has been established, while the function of slavery in American life—and what others call the "neo-slavery" of prison—hasn't been. And neither have the "inalienable rights" and concrete gains of the civil rights era. Kitwana maps the ways in which times have changed, and our movement can't be our parents' movement, with the ultimate goal of narrowing the gaps in understanding between them.

As former Executive Editor of *The Source*, and former Editorial Director of Third World Press, Kitwana has an

impressively holistic view of hip-hop culture, which enables him to examine how it "both empowers and undermines Black America" without being an apologist or a hater. Equally well-versed in America's cultural politics and "the Black cultural tradition of social activism," Kitwana is as capable a critic of the virtual reality that built the hype of Black criminality, as he is of the material reality that pushes Black people into the underground economy and punishes them disproportionately when it catches them there. Kitwana brings consistently original readings which restores the complexity of a people who too often live and die "between pop culture and news media reports."

While some decry the rise of gangsta rap as a phenomenon that could and should simply be excised from popular culture, Kitwana locates its rise in the politics of "gang affiliation"—somewhere between the LAPD database that listed 50 percent of the city's Black men as gang members in the early 1990s, and contemporary reality that finds "nearly 50 percent of America's prison population is Black." Recognizing prison as a central American institution, through which much Black life passes, Kitwana argues "with so many Blacks entering and exiting prison, this influence is inescapable" and maps its disruptive impact on the Black family, gender relations, economic, and political prospects, health and well-being, as well as hip-hop and other media representations of Black youth.

Kitwana's takes are fresh, so that even when he seems off, his points are well worth thinking through—as, for example, when he suggests that the sheer cost of mandatory minimum sentencing and the capture of increasing numbers of white

youth in its dragnet may provoke changes in prosecution of the drug war. Writing before September 11, Kitwana could not have foreseen a homeland security culture that depicts drug buyers as providing material aid to terrorists and maintains government spending on police by any means necessary—including an evisceration of social spending that surprises even those who no longer have reason to be surprised by such things.

Kitwana's look at the US military as "one of the few realistic roads to economic stability" for the hip-hop generation is crucial reading. Kitwana updates the plight of the Black soldier in WWII to the age of peacekeeping, where "inevitably, many struggle with the contradiction of fighting to secure democracy and free-market economics abroad, while they lack opportunities themselves at home, and neglected Black communities in center cities remain likened to war zones." Yet even as military budgets increase, and even though "military service compares somewhat favorably to other options available to young Black unskilled workers," many soldiers find themselves needing to take on additional jobs to get by.

Kitwana locates the distinct flavor of hip-hop activism here—between the gains of previous generations, who integrated the armed forces and pulled government jobs, and the new realities and failed promise of post-segregation America, which require a go-it-yourself social entrepreneurship that creates economic as well as political opportunity. The hope to be found throughout this book is its suggestion that we are living through the kind of age that precedes a wave of social transformation, when the contradictions between fiction and reality become too stark and too ridiculous to be maintained.

—Aaron Shuman

The New H.N.I.C.: The Death of Civil Rights and the Birth of Hip Hop

Todd Boyd

New York University Press

It was naïve for Todd Boyd to subtitle his book *The Death of Civil Rights and the Birth of Hip Hop*, and not expect people to wig out. After all, the hip-hop generation wasn't an immaculate conception: rappers might not grovel to Civil Rights heroes of previous decades, but many of them belong in the same Black Power lineage. So I assure you that Civil Rights ain't really dead, this author's just tripping.

Which is the sentiment of many reviewers of this book, who are generally far less willing than I to give Boyd the benefit of the doubt. As Nia-Malika Henderson writes in *SF Chronicle Book Review*, the author "seems to think that Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and hundreds of thousands of civil rights activists simply sat at segregated lunch counters all day singing 'We Shall Overcome.'" But if you're gonna diss Boyd, you have to be fair, and such writers as Henderson and author Cecil Brown—who compares the new Black hip-hop scholar to "Zip Coon, who puts down the Darky as a 'throw-back'"—are heavy-handed, if not vitriolic.

For instance: there's no question that Boyd resents what Brown calls "the takeover of hip-hop by white men." He likens the public's disdain for Black men *gettin' money* in hip-hop to an analogous situation in pro basketball, since the NBA is "a White corporation making money off Black labor." This allegation would also hold for the White-owned, but Black-identified BET network, and for a whole slew of

record label behemoths. By gettin' money, black men radically insert themselves into an entrenched—if venal—corporate economy. And Boyd makes no bones about his own economic success, effusively touting such ensigns as his doctoral degree and his Jaguar.

For Boyd, being a Black man and gettin' money amounts to having a political cause, which is axiomatic to the Black Power movement. This is, arguably, the point of disconnect between Black Power and the more established categories of left wing and right wing politics. Black folks are perceived, in mainstream society, as archetypal victims, which is why every other marginal group is trying to be like Black folks. In other words, Palestinians, queers, poor whites, Jews—to name a few—all try to mitigate their status by sympathizing with the African-American community. But not all African-Americans commit to the traditional leftist politics that many Afrophiles espouse.

During my freshman and sophomore years in college I lived in the African-American Theme House, which, at the time, was almost exclusively African-American, save for three non-Blacks: a Jewish guy, a Chinese guy, and a white girl (me). Middle-class, staunchly leftist, and full of delusions about education being geared to intellectual enrichment rather than social advancement, I was mystified by the politics of the Afro-House. Most of the students living there were the first generation in their families to attend college, and they had a definite sense of purpose: the idea was to graduate with a potentially-lucrative degree, get money, and bring it back to family and community. Which is not to say that Afro-House

residents were devoid of cultural interests, because everyone tempered his/her business-oriented major with a minor in African American Studies.

The politics in Afro-House, which combined "get money" ethos with stalwart Black nationalism, were right-leaning—a fact I found surprising at first, but gradually learned to accept, and even appreciate. Overall, Afro-House politics congeal with the ideology that Boyd promotes in *The New H.N.I.C.* wherein staking one's place in a capitalist economy becomes a form of personal empowerment. Which is not to inoculate Boyd from criticism: his book is, after all, a hustle, as Henderson and Brown suggest. But the hustle vibe keeps it close to its subject matter: it's naïve for journalists to assume that hip-hop isn't, at heart, as devoted to economics as it is to activism, or righteousness.

Yet Boyd's putting it down for Black Power doesn't mean Black readers are gonna be down for Boyd. In *The New H.N.I.C.* he uses language to *provoke* rather than persuade, and his flamboyant peppering of hip-hop argot is more likely to impress a white audience than mollify a Black audience. It shouldn't surprise us that African American scholars are Boyd's most vehement critics, whereas white folks treat him as a kind of rap music maven: for example, Boyd appeared in the guise of "hip-hop expert" on Public Radio's *To the Best of Our Knowledge* in June. In her final assessment, Henderson describes *The New H.N.I.C.* as "more soundbite than scholarship"—a Dick-and-Jane-style hip-hop primer. Perhaps, for all his self-congratulations, Boyd isn't the "Head Nigga In Charge" he envisions himself to be. —Rachel Swan

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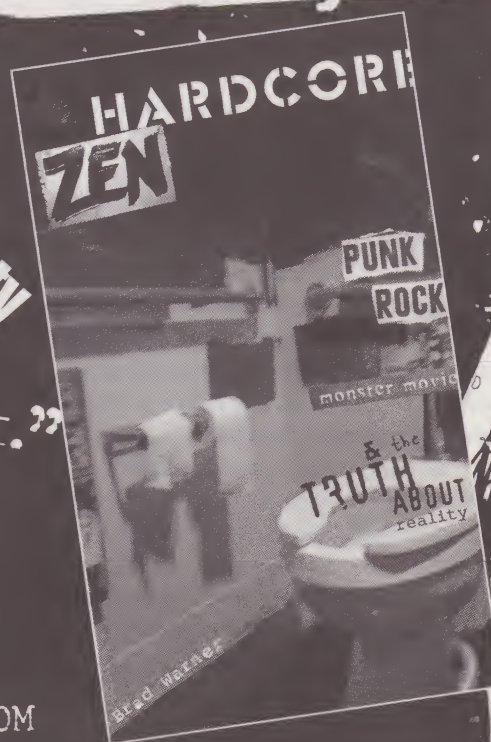
—Bill Stevenson, All/Descendents/Black Flag

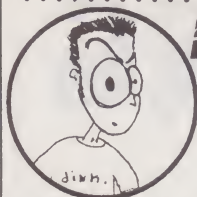
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NO. 42 Oct 2003

What? Perhaps... will never know. Maybe the

Today in Van Nuys, two men despoil

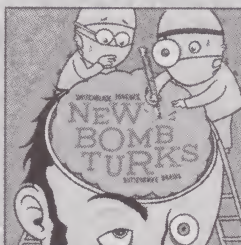
midst... no one at the scene cared to comment
perhaps fearing the consequences of



Mike Park

For The Love Of Music

Sub City Records / SC024-CD Out 11/11/2003



New Bomb Turks

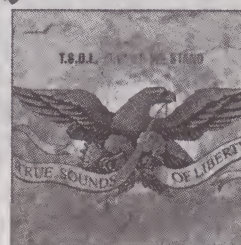
Switchblade Tongues, Butterknife Brains
The 8th full length from this Columbus Ohio quartet
is a collection of unrefined material.
Genthead Records/RPM 046 LP/CD Out 10/7/03



Radiation 4

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A multi-dimensional hardcore outfit that's akin to a mix
of Mr. Bungle and Cephalic Carnage.
Abacus Recordings / ABA 0004 Out Now!



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Divided We Stand

Brand new songs from the legendary original line-up,
featuring California candidate for Governor Jack
Griswold.
Nitro Records / Nitro 15854 Out Now!



Twenty2

The Dudes of Hazard

New full-length album from Canada's favorite melodic
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New School Records / NSR115 Out 11/4/2003!



Selfmademan

The Daylight Robbery

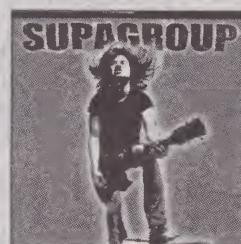
High charged and socially conscious punk rock that
jabs and whips with reckless abandon.
Headcase Records / HCR Lookout Records / 5538 630 Out 10/7/03



Sick Of It All

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Sick Of It All truly capture their NYC roots on 16
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Fat Wreck Chords / FAT 658 Out Now!



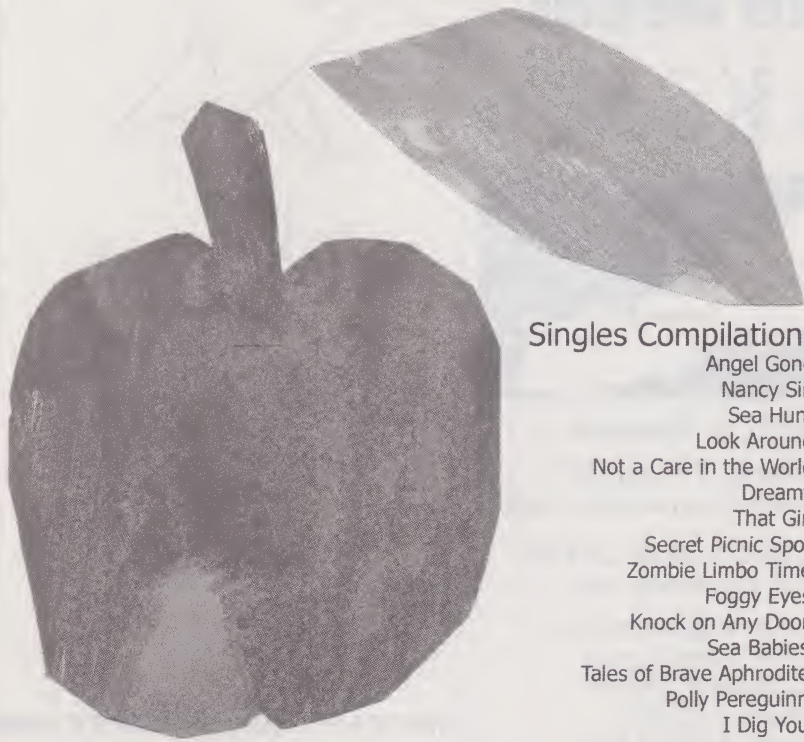
Supagroup

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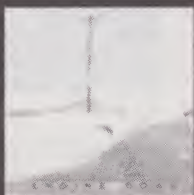


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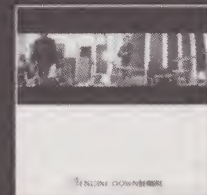
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PP49 BUSINESS AS USUAL? THE ROCKY RISE OF VAGRANT RECORDS Very few labels in the underground have had the meteoric success of California's Vagrant Records—nor the controversy that has come with it. In issue #49, Punk Planet turns its award-winning reporting to investigating Vagrant's business practices. Is the label's reputation for predatory band signings and larger-than-life marketing just sour grapes from competitors (as the label claims) or the emergence of a dangerous wolf in sheep's clothing (as its harshest critics contend)? Reporters Trevor Kelley and Kyle Ryan go beyond the rumors and delve into the fascinating story of the controversial punk label. **ALSO IN PP49:** Interviews with punk pioneers MIKE WATT and RICHARD HELL, rock 'n' rollers FEDERATION X, neo-wavers THE RAPTURE, and the always entertaining HOT WATER MUSIC. Articles (besides the cover story) include the story of Alex Sanchez, a LOS ANGELES GANG-PEACE ORGANIZER FACING DEPORTATION; the story of THE CIVIL SUIT AGAINST TWO SALVADORIAN GENERALS WHO NOW LIVE IN FLORIDA; and A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF BEING "BANNED" FROM THE UNITED STATES POST-SEPTEMBER 11. All this plus columns, DIY, reviews, and much, much more.

PP50: OUR KIND OF TOWN. Punk Planet marks its 50th issue with an issue that celebrates the magazine's home: Chicago. Featuring a diverse group of interviews and articles, PP50 showcases the many people, places, and things that make this city unique. To kick things off is the beautiful JON LANGFORD PAINTING of Chicago's Mayor Daley on the magazine's cover. Inside, Langford and bandmate Sally Timms wax philosophical about 25 YEARS OF THE MEKONS and what moving to Chicago has meant for the band. Also interviewed in this issue: post-rock poster darlings TORTOISE talk about why the critics got it all wrong; BLOODSHOT RECORDS explain the link between country and punk; the

woman behind VENUS ZINE talks about creating her amazing publication; LOS CRUDOS' MARTIN SORRONDEGUY talks about why he's left Chicago; HOUSING ORGANIZER JAMES MUMM talks about fighting gentrification; GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE (AND PUNK) JASON FARBMAN talks about taking on Chicago machine politics; the two wonderful people behind HOMOCORE CHICAGO talk about the good old days; the braintrust behind the "dance show for kids of all ages" CHIC-A-GO-GO talk about making one of the best shows on cable access; death row inmate AARON PATTERSON talks about the brutal Chicago cop that beat him into confessing to a murder he didn't commit; indie hip-hopers THE MOLEMEN drop some knowledge; and garage rockers THE DISHES make some noise. **PLUS MANY MORE INTERVIEWS WITH FOLKS FROM CHICAGO.** In addition, there's all the columns, reviews, DIYs, letters and everything else you've come to expect for 50 issues.

PP51 steers the car head-on into oncoming controversy with the emotional cover story, WAVE A WHITE FLAG: DODGING BULLETS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK. In this moving first-hand account, author and frequent PP contributor Jeff Guntzel travels to the West Bank. Dodging bullets and checkpoints, Jeff and a small team of dogged activists end up being the first Americans into the Jenin refugee camp after the Israeli Defense Forces leveled it. A truly heartbreaking story told with great empathy for both sides, Jeff's account is not to be missed. There's a ton more don't-miss material in this issue of Punk Planet including Mark Andersen's (co-author of the DC punk history book *Dance of Days*) unique interview with BRATMOBILE'S ALLISON WOLFE and BLUEGRASS LEGEND HAZEL DICKENS—these two women from different backgrounds and different eras discover just how much they have in common. Also interviewed in PP51: AARON COMETBUS's amazing zine turns 20; EPITAPH RECORDS' CHIEF BRETT GUREWITZ talks about his drug addiction, re-joining Bad Religion and learning to love life again; rocker and

all-around amazing woman SARAH DOUGHER; Billy Joe Armstrong's ADELIN RECORDS; truly insane rockers GUYANA PUNCH LINE bring the noise; queer punk ANDREW MARTINI (LIMPWRIST, KILL THE MAN WHO QUESTIONS); and much more. Articles in PP51 (in addition to Jeff's amazing account) include a profile of TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST AND ARTIST ED VARGA; the PRIVATIZATION OF THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL SYSTEM; and an account of the STRUGGLES OF DAY LABORERS IN CHICAGO. And more!

PP52 warms up the cold winter months with PAY TO CUM, an in-depth look at the growing trend of punk rock internet porn. Punk Planet's Chris Ziegler delves deep into the world of DIY porn to figure out if it's really offering something different—or is it just the same sleaze operating on a smaller scale? Ziegler's story offers a fascinating look into this world. Also in PP52: Interviews with THE KILLS, Allison from the much-loved Discount's new band; Sex Pistols photographer DENNIS MORRIS; instrumentalists DENALI; author ZOE TROPE; rockers THE HISSYFITS; the always entertaining punks THE FLESHIES (featuring a portrait drawn by cartoonist Janelle!); Oaklandish art collective NONCHALANCE; turntablist CHRISTIAN MARCLAY; political hardcore band BLOWBACK; and political thinker MICHAEL PARENTI talks about the "terrorism trap." Other articles in PP52 include a look at RADICAL LIBRARIANS; the FIGHT AGAINST WHITE-POWER MUSIC; and a look at how THE GAY PRIDE MOVEMENT HAS SOLD OUT. Also making its first appearance in Punk Planet #52 is the magazine's ALL NEW FRONT SECTION, STATIC. While PP51 saw a reduction in the number of columnists writing for PP, PP52 sees the columns move to the back of the magazine and replaced by Static—almost a "zine within a zine" filled with shorter pieces about bands, people, artists, and more. It's totally new and very exciting. But even with the changes, everything you still have come to count on is here: reviews, columns, DIYs, and more... only better! 176 pages.

PP53 leads off with an amazing

exclusive interview with the three members of the legendary JAWBREAKER. Seven years after the band broke up, Punk Planet was able to talk with Blake, Chris, and Adam about what happened and look at the lasting legacy of the band. A must-have for fans both new and old, this interview is ultra-candid and truly revealing. The story will only be told once and they told it to Punk Planet. PP53 also features EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE COMING WAR IN IRAQ. In coverage that spans three sections of the magazine Punk Planet looks at life in the streets of Iraq, talks with ex-arms inspector Scott Ritter, and has a chat about the US' history with Iraq with investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill. Eye-opening and, well, downright scary, this coverage gives important background to the Bush administration's insistence on war. It's not all breakups and bombings in PP53, however. Also in the issue are interviews with JOHN DOE about going acoustic, Touch & Go dance party band !!! brings the funk, Lookout's THE PATTERN discusses the rebirth of rock n' roll, indie hip-hop artist MR. LIF drops some knowledge, and Punk Planet visits with printer Jen Farrell and STAR-SHAPED PRESS. Additional articles include a look at the ROCK N ROLL CAMP FOR GIRLS; how the government is KILLING WEB RADIO; and a look at what happens to PRISONERS ONCE THEY'RE RELEASED. In addition, PP53 features our new front section STATIC, columns, DIY, reviews and much more. 160 pgs

PP54 Punk Planet #54 asks the question WHERE HAVE ALL THE MUSICIANS GONE? In this time of war coming at any moment, BRATMOBILE'S ALISON WOLF, ANTI-FLAG'S JUSTIN SANE, SLEATER-KINNEY'S CARRIE BROWNSTEIN, TED LEO, ATOM & HIS PACKAGE, JON LANGFORD, DILLINGER 4's ERIC FUNK and many more speak out against it with passion and intelligence. Also in this issue, ARTISTS REMEMBER JOE STRUMMER. Interviews in this issue include Omaha's buzz band CURSIVE, label G-7 WELCOMING COMMITTEE, artist ERIC DROOKER (who also provided the art for this issue's cover), Get Your War On's DAVID REES, ex-

Karate EAMONN VITT, THIS BIKE IS A PIPE BOMB, BLACK DICE and more! And in addition to all that, PP54 features an in-depth look at how CLEAR CHANNEL IS TAKING OVER ROCK CLUBS. It's a jam-packed issue complete with Static, Columns, DIY Files, and much, much more.

PP55 THE REVENGE OF PRINT—our best theme issue ever. So who's in the issue? The powerhouses behind the alt-lit zine MCSWEENEY'S share their secrets in a rare interview. The McSweeney's piece is accompanied by an excerpt from bestselling author (and McSweeney's founder) DAVE EGGERS' book "You Shall Know Our Velocity". Also interviewed (with writing excerpts too): culture jamming zine STAY FREE, punk rock parenting bible HIP MAMMA, zinester extraordinaire IGGY SCAM, rock critic EVERETT TRUE and his new DIY upstart zine CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES, self-publishers NO MEDIA KINGS and Screaming Weasel playwright JOHN JUGHEAD, underground comix phenom KAZ, activist/author JAMES TRACY, the brains behind ZINE GUIDE, and the zines EMERGENCY and UNCERTAIN NERVOUS SYSTEMS. It ain't all interviews and writing excerpts in PP55, however. The theme carries over to Punk Planet's articles section as well, with pieces on FEMINIST BOOKSTORES FIGHT TO STAY ALIVE, ZINE LIBRARIES, TOP SHELF COMICS SUCCESSFUL STRUGGLE AGAINST BANKRUPTCY, CHICANO ZINE HASTA CUANDO, and AKASHIC BOOKS' Johnny Temple writes a manifesto for self-publishers. Plus, PP55 features all the reviews, columns, DIY, Static, and more that you've come to expect. Plus, PP55 features a cover design by the internationally celebrated designer ART CHANTRY. Longest issue ever at 184 pgs!

PP56 takes a unique look at life in the military through the eyes of an soldier in the piece "AN ARMY OF NONE". His tale is both funny and sad and offers a perspective you never hear about: the voice of a troop that doesn't want your "support"—he just wants to go back to his regular life. Also in Punk Planet #56: JELLO BIAFRA INTERVIEWS REPORTER GREG PALLAST about the failings of

the mainstream media; punk legends WIRE talk about their third time 'round; WILL OLDHAM breaks his press silence in a rare interview; FAT MIKE from NOFX talks politics with Ramsey from AK Press; hardcore purists BANE; ex-Pavement SCOTT KANNBERG talks about moving on; and Brazilian Riot-Girl revolutionaries DOMINATRIX bring the noise. In addition to the cover story, PP56 also features articles about the SILENCING OF THE MEDIA DURING THE WAR and a look at POLITICAL GRAFITTI IN AUSTRALIA. Also DIY, Columns, 30 pages of reviews, and much, much more. 168 pages.

PP57 has a sit-down discussion with the legendary NICK CAVE. In this sprawling, long-form interview, Punk Planet contributing editor Trevor Kelley talks with Cave about his lengthy career and moving back to independents. Punk Planet 57 also features Jeff Guntzel's report from Baghdad, "THE DEVIL INSIDE". Having traveled to Iraq over a half-dozen times during the pre-war era of sanctions and starvation, Guntzel goes back two weeks after Bush declared the US's "mission accomplished" only to discover that it's anything but. In addition to these lead features, PP57 features interviews with TRAVIS MORRISON of the DISMEMBERMENT PLAN about the end of the band; DC buzz band BLACK EYES drops some knowledge; North Dakota's JUNE PANIC talks about his age of enlightenment; the CURSED get pissed; the Indigo Girls' AMY RAY interviews Native American activist WINONA LADUKE; the filmmakers behind the graffiti documentary STYLE WARS show their street smarts; and the ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION talk about living in a police state. Articles in PP57 include a look at DEPORTATIONS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11th; the FCC's APPROVAL OF MEDIA CONSOLIDATION; and a hilarious diary from a 48 HOUR SLEEP DEPRIVATION STUDY. 168 pgs

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For an editorial history of el Tianguis:
<http://www.uam.mx/difusion/revista/may2001/bucio.html> in Spanish only.

Information on Mexican rock, punk, and coun-
terculture in general (including Tianguis el
Chopo) can be found in the excellent books
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Counterculture* by Eric Zolov in English or
Huaraches de Anteazul by Federico Sánchez
and *La Nueva Música Clásica* by José Agustín
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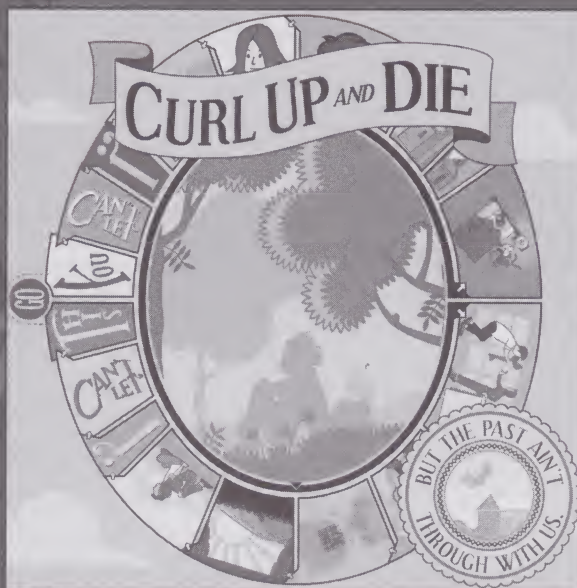
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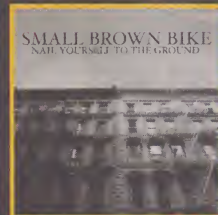
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